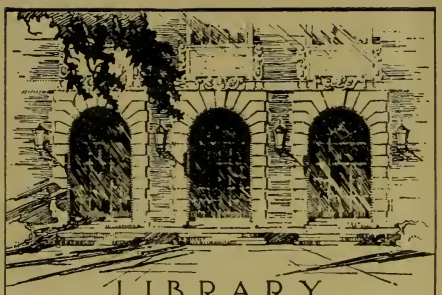

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MARY LYNDSAY.

VOL. II.

MARY LYNDSAY.

BY

THE LADY EMILY PONSONBY,

AUTHOR OF

"THE DISCIPLINE OF LIFE."

"KATHERINE AND HER SISTERS,"

&c., &c.

"How much we love God, how submissive we are to God's will, we cannot otherwise than by willingly undergoing or patiently bearing afflictions, well express; without it no sore trial of virtue can be; without it no excellent example of goodness had ever been."—BARROW.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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MARY LYNDSAY.

CHAPTER I.

"Though young, yet sorrowful."
KIRKE WHITE.

"HAS my father got a headache this morning, mother?" inquired Mary, anxiously.

"Not a *real* headache," was Mrs. Lyndsay's reply; "but a worried head."

It was a cold morning in December. Summer, autumn, and early winter had slipped away, and had left cares behind them. The harvest had not been plentiful, and there had already been a long frost. Provisions were dear, coals very dear.

The poor felt the pressure, and they, perhaps, still more whose fixed incomes had no elasticity to meet increasing demands. Poverty had occupied Captain Lyndsay during the whole of the autumn; it had oppressed and soured him; and though Mary was sacred from his harshness, Mrs. Lyndsay felt it. She too was becoming convinced that poverty was the one unbearable evil in life.

Though the morning was extremely cold, she and Mary were sitting without a fire. It was a very necessary economy, but a painful one. It made her temper fretful.

To Mary herself these cares had been beneficent. She saw that they were poorer than ever, and guessed that her illness was the cause. This gave the motive and zest to her exertions which her mind required. She gave her heart to

the necessity night and day, and it was by her cares and contrivances that the evil was in any degree mastered. Her thoughts were thus drawn from herself, and her character resumed more of its old activity than had once seemed possible. Love and gratitude to her parents had given it a new spring, and higher and holier motives had set new wheels in motion.

"Is there any particular worry, mother?" she asked, pausing a moment in her ceaseless work.

"Bills, Mary; two or three bills this morning; and each a few pounds more than he expected. Everything gets worse and worse, and it is hard, just when we are beginning to grow old, and to need comforts more. Your father hates a bad fire, and says the cold makes his bones ache. So it does mine. The fact is, Mary,

some people are born to be rich, and it is no use for *them* to try to be satisfied with poverty. Your father and I were born to be rich. Habit is a great deal, you know, so that if we had been born to be poor, habit must have accustomed us to it by this time; but it has not. We were born to be rich, and so we can't be comfortable poor. That is what I was thinking in bed last night."

"Is there anything more we could do?" Mary asked, after a moment's thought. "I always think it would be better to do without something, than to be uncomfortable in many things. I sometimes think, if we had a woman to do the hard work, we might manage without a maid. I should like it."

"No," Mrs. Lyndsay said, rousing up, "I won't have that, Mary. I am sure now

I often think what a life it is for a girl like you. I am sure at your age I should have gone mad with it, or silly, or died, or something."

"Oh! mother, don't say that. What should I do if I did not work?" and over her face there came the shadow of the great tribulation that had befallen her. She spoke as she felt. To work was all that supported her now. No doubt at her age enjoyment and hope in life would come again; but there had been no reviving as yet. When she thought upon the past, she was still in the shadow of death.

"At any rate, I won't hear of that. Besides, things will come round of course. Coals don't mean, I suppose, to be up at 38s. for ever—or if they do, why, it will soon be Spring, and we shall not care. I sometimes think I should not care for any-

thing if we could have good fires. I must say I particularly dislike to be cold."

"Let us go and sit in the kitchen," Mary said, rising up and gathering her work together. "While we work it will be just as well to be there."

"Very well. I don't mind. Once I used to be proud about such things; but now I only wish to be warm."

Mary's suggestion answered. Mrs. Lyndsay became warm first, and then comfortable; then she fell into a little doze, brought on by the cold morning, the hot fire, and the comfort of her position.

Seeing her happy, Mary went back to the drawing-room to arrange some other matters. As she closed the kitchen door, she saw Frank, to her great surprise, standing at the back door. She was

about to exclaim joyfully, when he, first putting his finger on his lips, silently beckoned to her to come to him.

She obeyed, without much anxiety, for Frank was still too much of a boy not to delight in mysteries.

"I say, Mary," he began, in a whisper, "I want to speak to you without being heard. Put on your bonnet, and come out on the road. I got in without being seen, and now shall go back again.

"I will come directly; but oh! Frank, what is the matter?"

"I'm in a little mess, that's what the matter is, and I want you to see about it for me. Make no noise, but come as soon as you can." And he vanished.

Mary's heart sank. It was not the first time that Frank had spoken of his debts, and she had often urged him to confess them, feeling that a small

sacrifice on their part might make him happy and in comfort. But at this moment the confession did seem an unbearable evil.

Tears came into her eyes, as she put on her bonnet. With one of the sudden flashes of memory, the sweet bright days of old, when life was so hopeful and happy, came before her, and the contrast with the cares of the present was painful. She was not one who delighted in action for its own sake; who was *always* strong when there was something to be done. Intense as was her desire to make happy, was her fear of giving pain, and while those cares of life that lessen pain and add to comfort were sweet to her, it was agony to enter into those which afflict or ruffle.

She hastened away, however, to

know the worst. As she left the cottage-gate, she saw Frank already far down the road, and breathlessly pursued him. With his teasing propensities, he kept hurrying before her, always making a fresh start as soon as she reached him, until he saw that she really was exhausted. He then stopped, and took off his hat, brushed his hair through his fingers, looked awkward and uneasy, but made no observation.

"Dear Frank, what is the matter?" Mary said, anxiously. "Don't keep me in suspense."

"The matter is what I told you, Mary. I'm in a mess."

"Is it debt, Frank?"

"No, no—much worse than debt—you don't suppose I should make myself so uncomfortable about a paltry debt, do you?"

She felt relieved for an instant, then was angry with herself for being so. "Dear Frank, do say what it is?" she said, persuasively; "whatever it is I will do what I can to help you."

"That's what I hope you will. Well, Mary, what shall you think if I tell you that Mr. Merivale has discharged me? Here's a letter for my father all about it; but I would not give it to him till I had told you."

Mary's sensations of relief were at an end. Frank's safe prospects were her father's one great support and comfort.

"That is sad, indeed, Frank," she exclaimed. "How could he be so unkind? Oh! Frank," she added, a sudden flash of fear crossing her face, "I hope you have done nothing wrong!"

"No Mary, nothing wrong. At the

same time I don't say that Mr. Merivale is to blame. I only say, if he sticks to it, all my worldly hopes are blighted, and what is to become of me, I am sure I don't know."

"Dear Frank, pray tell me all about it. You need not be afraid. Even if I do blame, you know it will make no difference. I will still do all I can to help you."

"Well, Mary," he said, awkwardly, "the story is this. There's a poor fellow in the bank, one of the upper clerks, who got into distress, and he helped himself. He never meant to do anything dishonest; he meant to set all right again in no time; but then he couldn't; it was an awkward business, altering the books and that kind of thing; but, poor fellow, never meaning it, I'm very sure. And I happened to find it out—no matter how;

I got hold of it ; in fact he betrayed himself; and I didn't tell. There Mary ! there's the story, and there's my euormous crime."

" Oh ! Frank," she exclaimed, " and you were trusted !"

" Trusted. Yes of course we are; but it's not so pleasant, let me tell you, Mary, to be telling tales."

" I think I should have told even if *you* had done it," Mary said, with excitement, " though I should have died afterwards."

" Well, Mary, I am not so hard-hearted as you are. I am rather a fool about that sort of thing. I can't bear to see a poor fellow in distress, much less to bring him to distress. I thought it would be all right, and I did not want to be making mischief without reason. It is all very well to say I

ought. I know I *ought*, but one don't do many things one ought to do."

"And was it found out, Frank? And, dear Frank, were *you* suspected of such a dreadful thing?"

"Of course it was found out, Mary. Those things always are; a man's a fool if he thinks they will not; especially with such sharp eyes about as Mr. Merivale keeps. It all came out, and there was a proper row. The poor fellow is in prison now. He meant to make it all right, I'm certain, if he had had time."

"And you! Frank," Mary asked, anxiously, to say the truth feeling very little interest or pity for the poor fellow.

"Why, there was a row, as I told you, and cross-examinations and taking oaths and unpleasant things of that kind; and I," he said, with dignity, "was not going

to perjure myself for any man's sake; so it all came out. And I was discharged on the spot by the head clerk in Mr. Merivale's name. *He* was good-natured and said he was sorry for me, so I sent him back to Mr. Merivale to say I meant no harm, and I begged him not to be so hard, but he came back and brought this letter to my father, and said Mr. Merivale was quite determined. This was the day before yesterday; but I still thought he would think better of it, so I went to my lodgings and passed a very uncomfortable night, and in the morning, finding no letters for me, I wrote to Mr. Merivale myself, and told him if he persisted I was ruined for ever, and in return I got these words, "Mr. Lyndsay should have thought of this before he betrayed his trust," and that was all. So now, Mary, I am done for,

unless he is made to give way. But he *must*. And he will, I am sure, if you write to him."

"I! Frank!" she cried, shrinking from him. "Oh! no, I cannot do it."

"Very well, Mary, I only say somebody must, and you are the best person to do it. I don't believe he could refuse you if he tried. Why, what do you suppose will happen to me if he persists in this folly? There am I turned out of the bank, the very day that poor fellow goes to prison. People don't make distinctions, and of course I shall be supposed to be a regular rogue. Nobody will take me, indeed I think they would be fools if they did, so there shall I be without a penny in the world, and obliged to go and be a street-sweeper in Australia. There's one thing certain, Mary; I shall not stay

here to have the hand of scorn pointing at me, so you had better make up your mind to do it at once."

Mary stood gravely considering. The truth of what he said was too apparent for her to attempt to argue against it, and much as her feeling rebelled, love for Frank was already conquering her "woman's delicacy." "I will ask my father what is best," she said, at last. "He will be the best judge."

"Why ask him anything about it, Mary? I can tell you it is not a very pleasant thing to be shown up to my father. He's bad enough at any time when he is cross, and when one feels to deserve it a little it will be unbearable. Now there's a good-natured girl; write the letter, and I will take it back to London, and nobody will know a word about it."

"No, Frank," she said very firmly, "I am sorry for you, but I will not do such a thing in secret for all the world. Dear Frank, my father will be just, even if he is angry, and you must try to bear it. I hope that will be all you will have to bear. If he thinks I ought, I will write for you."

"Very well. One must make up one's mind to unpleasant things. Now, the sooner you set about the business, the better on every account. I hate a thing of this sort hanging over me, and besides that, Mr. Hudson, the head clerk, says, when once Mr. Merivale determines on a thing, he gets more and more fixed every moment that passes. So we had better not leave another night for him to sleep upon it; if he ever sleeps, which I don't believe."

They returned slowly to the house. Frank,

relieved by confession, was in good spirits, and laughed at Mary for her scruples, in writing to the poor old soul. "He will be *glad* to do it, Mary, for you. I told you once he would not go moping all his life, but now I think he will, If you had but seen his face when I told him you were dangerously ill, and begged him to let me run down and see how you were. It was like as if he died on the spot. I took no notice of course, but I just threw in, to comfort him, that you were very strong, and that I was certain you would get over it. He ought to remember that."

Mary might be touched, but it did not make her more willing to write. She had made up her mind, however, to leave it to her father, and as Frank felt certain of his father's wishes, he was easy.

They entered the house by the back door. Frank went to his mother in the kitchen, and

told her his tale, to which she listened with breathless interest. Her sympathies were all with Frank and the poor fellow.

Mary went to her father with the letter. She was more fearful than if the question concerned herself, for though she never allowed he was unjust, she knew Frank was little approved of by his father.

Captain Lyndsay's place of study in the winter was in front of the fire, and as near to it as possible. The pain in his maimed limb made the indulgence of a fire almost a necessity. That it was burning brightly this morning, was the cause that he received Mary not only with kindness, but with cheerfulness. The headache he had brought to the breakfast-table had been blown away by the bright flames his exertions had caused.

Mary saw at once that her moment

was a favourable one. She was not much given to circumlocution in her speech, and now, as usual, went to the point at once. She began with, "A very sad thing has happened about poor Frank," and then went on with her plain, unvarnished tale.

Captain Lyndsay's brow darkened. He was a strictly honourable man in money matters. His horror of a debt was one of the causes that made poverty so hateful to him.

"I always knew he was a good for nothing scamp," he broke out, fiercely, when Mary ceased.

"No, dear father, you must not say that. Frank was too easy and good-natured, but he told the truth, or he would not have been here now. He is very sorry for it all, and knows you have a right to be angry with him, but

I am sure it is a lesson, and he never will be so thoughtless any more.

"He will have no opportunities," Captain Lyndsay said, bitterly. "There, Mary," handing her Mr. Merivale's letter, "there is an end to our acquaintance with him, and all my hopes for Frank."

Mary had never seen her father's brow so dark and gloomy. Other hopes had also been banished by the blow.

She took the letter and read it.

"Sir,

"It is my painful duty to inform you that I have dismissed your son from my employment. He has betrayed my trust, and confidence once broken is never restored. It is needless for me to enlarge on the enormity of his offence. Your own good sense and integrity will reflect upon it with sufficient bitterness.

I regret that the connexion between us is dissolved for ever.

"I remain, sir,

"Your faithful servant,

"HUBERT MERIVALE."

"What is to be done for Frank?" she asked, tremblingly, as she laid the letter down.

"He must beg," was the bitter reply. "No fool would trust him now."

"No," she said, sadly; "yet it is hard."

"Hard, Mary, by no means. As a man sows he must reap. It is just."

He knit his brows, and sat in gloomy silence.

Mary watched him for some minutes. She expected, she hoped the proposal would come from his lips, but it came

not. Captain Lyndsay's pride made him often mean; but at this moment a better pride was uppermost; the pride of wounded honour.

At length she put her arm round his neck, and said softly—

"Father, would it be right for me to write to Mr. Merivale for Frank?"

It was a costly sacrifice she made. Her father saw and appreciated it.

He started; a flash of light gleamed from his eyes, and pervaded his countenance. The idea had not suggested itself. Partly to conceal what he felt, partly in genuine emotion, he put his arm round her, and kissing her, simply said—

"My dearest child!"

Whatever lingering backwardness had been in Mary's mind was conquered; to save her brother, to receive such a kiss from her father, was more than payment

for the sacrifice, costly though it was.

She left him to perform her task. It was not only her natural modesty and shrinking that made it painful; vague terrors, the pain of asking, the dread of receiving obligation, the nearness to which it brought her with him, all these things oppressed and made her tremble—but with an effort she conquered all, drove her terrors away, and wrote her letter. It was this:—

"Dear Mr. Merivale,—

"I have no right to ask a favour of you. I know that very well; but your letter to my father has made us all very unhappy, and I cannot help asking you to think over your decision once more. I know, and so does my father, that you have only done what is natural and just. Frank has behaved very ill, and

deserves to suffer; but the circumstances under which he is dismissed will make the suffering follow him all his life, and would fix a reproach on him which he does not deserve. He was weak and thoughtless; he was too much led by kindness, and did not think seriously enough of the consequences of what he was concealing; but I am sure he is honest; miserable as we all are, I would not ask you to re-consider your decision if I was not. It has been a lesson to him for all his life, and if your kindness will try him once again I am sure you will find him worthy of your trust. Forgive me for writing this. I ought to say more; but you will know better than I can say it, what I must feel in making such a request."

She wrote thus far without much thought, for it was from her heart, but

there she paused, uncertain how to make an end. All forms of ending seemed either false to her own feeling, or under the circumstances, cold and formal towards him. At length she added the true expression of her mind;

"Yours very grateful,
"MARY LYNDSAY."

And without trusting herself to further consideration, she took her letter to her father. He approved, and, after a short interview with his son, in which he made Frank thoroughly aware of his displeasure, and thoroughly ashamed of himself, the latter returned to London with the letter. On arriving, he was to despatch it by a messenger to Mr. Merivale's house.

"You're a good girl, Mary," Frank said, with gratitude, and with more of softness than was common to him when

he took his departure, "as good a girl as ever lived, and I am very much obliged to you. I know I am a made man again, and—(I shall not thank Mr. Merivale, because of course it will be a pleasure to him)—but I shall always thank *you*. And I think, Mary, that I shall try to be more steady in future, for your sake."

Mary smiled, thanked him, and kissed him, and was again repaid.

The night she passed was, however, a fearful and a trembling one. The vague terrors she could banish in the daylight seized upon her in the still hours of darkness; and three times she awoke with a start, awakened by the agony of a dream in which she was consenting to be Mr. Merivale's wife.

The following day passed, and no answer came. Another still, and no reply. Cap-

tain Lyndsay looked dark as night. Mary scarcely dared to pronounce Frank's name. The suspense dissipated her selfish terrors, and all things seemed better bearable than that Frank should suffer.

On the third morning came a letter of inquiry from Frank, with an entreaty not to keep him in uncertainty any longer. His letter was a miserable and penitent one, and it was evident that, however painful it might be, the uncertainty was giving thought and reflection to his careless character. Mary saw it, yet could not be glad. She began to long for a sight of Mr. Merivale as earnestly as she had once desired to avoid him.

The third day and the fourth passed, and still no reply. Captain Lyndsay gave it up, and made Mary wretched and Mrs. Lyndsay hysterical, by pronouncing positively that Frank must emigrate, and try

his chance in another world. Mary, naturally sanguine, kept up a lingering hope; but when the fifth morning dawned, and no letter appeared, even her patience began to fail.

During that morning she was at work alone in the drawing-room, when, suddenly raising her eyes, she saw Mr. Merivale at the gate. She started up, her heart beating with mingled hope and fear; hope for Frank, and fear for herself, but the hope for Frank gained the victory. Their acquaintances were so few, and visits so rare a thing, that the one maid had rarely been called on to admit visitors. It was Mary herself who generally received their guests at the door, and, after a moment's thought, she went, as was her custom, now.

Mr. Merivale was still at the gate, waiting, as it seemed, until he was observed;

but when Mary opened the cottage door he entered and came forward.

She was agitated and breathless; that she could not help; but she controlled herself, and showed her agitation less than she supposed.

He shook her hand in grave silence, the gravity of his countenance never changing, even when he looked at her, even when he saw how perturbed in spirit she was.

Not knowing what to say, she murmured that her father was at home.

"No, Miss Lyndsay," he replied; "I came to speak to you."

Internally her fears increased; but the certainty that the moment was come, and that she *must* receive him alone, gave her, outwardly, a greater degree of self-possession.

"Will you come in here?" she said, leading the way into the drawing-room, and he silently followed her.

The grate again was fireless, although the cold of the weather had increased, but no word of apology on that score rose to Mary's lips. She sat down and pushed a chair towards him, and then said, as she slightly bent forward, "Have you forgiven me for writing to you?"

Even then his countenance remained unchanged, and he only said, "You have asked a hard thing, Miss Lyndsay."

"I know," she said, "we all feel it, but . . . ." She stopped. His grave countenance chilled and terrified her. She thought it spoke of determined severity against Frank, and it did so in a degree. That love of money which was rooted in his soul made Frank's offence an almost unpardonable one. *Almost.* There was another thought within.

"You have asked a hard thing," he repeated. "Broken trust cannot be mended."

"I don't wonder that you feel it so," she said, sadly. "I know Frank deserves your displeasure. Yet indeed, if you would have pity on him, I am sure you would never repent. I would not ask you to pardon him otherwise."

He came suddenly towards her, and held out his hand. She imagined he was going to grant her request, and gave it readily and gratefully; but he eagerly grasped it, and she felt her soul die away.

He bent towards her, his whole countenance transformed in its agony of earnestness, and murmured in low, passionate tones, "Mary, Mary, be my wife, and your brother shall be my brother, and I will care for his welfare more than my own."

When the words were actually spoken; words whose shadow had these many

days been hovering over her—she felt less terrified than she had been by her fancy's picture.

She drew her hand away without unkindness, and with a kind of mournful calmness said—"Oh, Mr. Merivale, would you buy love?"

"Can you blame me?" he replied, with unutterable sadness—"so only on this earth can love ever be mine."

"Yes, because it is unworthy of you," she said, simply, yet forcibly.

A glow of shame, such a glow as never since his youth had overspread his countenance, flushed his cheek. And with the shame, his nobler nature awoke within him.

"You say truly, Mary," he said, sadly and humbly. "It *is* unworthy; not of me, few things are unworthy of me; but it is unworthy of any being who calls

himself by the name of man. You have conquered. He is pardoned, fully and freely; and now, farewell!"

"Oh! Mr. Merivale," she exclaimed, rising and standing before him with streaming eyes. "I wish . . ."

"What do you wish?" He paused, and bent eagerly towards her to ask. A moment before hope was dead, now it had sprung up again.

"I wish I could do what you ask—but I cannot."

"Mary," he said, seriously, calling to mind her father's words, "I will not urge you with vain arguments now. I know I am not now such as you could love, and what I might be you cannot foresee. But this let me say to you. My love for you is a thing that cannot change; if you would suffer it, it would shield and cherish you; if you will not,

it will still live on unblest. Remember this; and if evil days come, when the cares of life press heavily on your spirit, remember that my love is there unchanged, waiting only your word and will, to help or comfort you. And now again, farewell!"

"Stay," she said, touched and agitated by the calm and mournful tenderness of his words, "let me tell you why I seem so thankless—why I cannot love you, and never can. There is one . . . . ." She paused to collect her mind, to find courage to speak her soul's hidden agony, and in that pause her eyes fell on his face, and saw the emotion of pain that convulsed it. Instinctively she changed her words, and gathering power, she went on, "There *was* one, but he is dead, whom I did love, and ever shall. He died in battle, in India, and my heart

is buried in his grave. I have nothing now to give."

There was another pause. In that pause many thoughts swept over, many passions stirred in, Mr. Merivale's mind. Hate and jealousy of the dead; pity for Mary; despair of her love; and then, finally,—hope, new and strong. He knew enough of human nature, of Mary's nature, to perceive that in this dead love his best chance of winning, if not her love, yet her pity, lay.

"Then you, too, have suffered," he said, with tenderness. "I thought the God who watches over innocence would have shielded *you* from the world's miseries. I ask nothing now, Mary; but think of my words, and if you can ever bear it, let me comfort you."

He waited neither for acceptance nor forbidding, but left her alone.

She felt the pressure of a chain about her, and her heart sank; but without pausing to think of herself, she remembered her father's anxiety, and brushing her tears away, hastened to relieve it.

She stood by him, and laid her arm on his shoulder. "Father, Frank is forgiven."

"Thank God and you, Mary," he said, with earnest fervency; and another of his fond and precious kisses was pressed upon her cheek.

She still stood trembling. She felt she ought to confess what had passed, but the weight on her heart withheld her.

He looked into her tear-stained face, and saw there was something to be said. A faint hope animated him. After a moment's waiting for a confession, he relieved her by his inquiring,

"Have you more to tell me, Mary," he asked, gravely. "Did Mr. Merivale say more?"

"He said again what he said before," she replied, weeping.

"And you, Mary?"

"Oh! father, I could not."

He made no answer. Disappointment, only by pity withheld from displeasure, was evident on his face. The disappointment wrung Mary's heart.

"Oh! father, I would if I could," she cried, earnestly. She paused a moment, then clasping her hands, changed the tense, and added, "I will if I can." It was beginning to assume the form of a duty and necessity in Mary's mind, a fatal form there.

"If you ever could, Mary," he said, with grave tenderness, "it would be the

happiness and comfort of my life, But we will think of it no more." And he kissed and dismissed her.

CHAPTER II.

"Je cherche autant la croix, et la desire,
Comme autrefoys je l'ay voulu fouyr,
Je cherche autant par tourment en jouyr,
Comme autrefoys j'ay craint son dur martyre."

MARGUERITE DE NAVARRE.

THE frost deepened, the cold became intense. Captain Lyndsay felt it severely, but bore it with proud resignation. Mrs. Lyndsay never ceased to grumble, and though barely five-and-forty, spoke mournfully and bitterly about her old age.

On the third morning after Mr. Meri-

vale's visit, four tons of the best Newcastle coal, now risen far beyond the 38s. which had excited Mrs. Lyndsay's wrath, were placed in Captain Lyndsay's coal cellar before even Mary was up in the morning. The maid informed her of it when she came down, and said she was glad Captain Lyndsay had had the sense to order them at last. A shadow fell on Mary's face. She guessed how it was.

His penetrating eyes, even in that agitating visit, had observed the empty grate, and had imagined the cause. That he should see was not uncommon. His mind was keen to observe and calculate, but the thoughtful kindness and liberal hand were new.

It was a singular lover's gift, but it brought comfort with it ; Mary could not but own it as she saw her mother

revelling in the warmth imparted to the house. She grumbled no more, nor alluded to her age, but said it was pleasant to be rich and warm.

Captain Lyndsay's pride suffered a severe shock. From a son-in-law he was prepared to receive much comfort, but a gift of coals from a rejected lover was a bitter pill. The thought of sending the gift back did in the first moment of its announcement cross his mind; but after reflection the temptation was surmounted. He bore it first with equanimity, and after a time took it as a prognostication of the coming fulfilment of his wishes.

In a fortnight Mr. Merivale called, and sat for some time with Captain Lyndsay conversing on Frank's prospects and character; and again Captain Lyndsay was struck by the shrewd and uncommon powers he exhibited. He said nothing of

Mary, and Captain Lyndsay said nothing of the gift.

Mary saw him come; though she would not avoid, she felt unwilling needlessly to put herself before him, and this time she sent the maid to open the door. But before he left the house her mind changed. She could not bear to receive the comforts he had given her parents, and not to thank him. She called her mother to be with her, and then opened the drawing-room door.

He passed it; she went straight to him and said, "Mr Merivale, you have said nothing: but we know whose kindness it is that has thought of us, and we thank you for it." She glanced with a faint smile at the blazing fire-place.

He coloured. His unchangeable countenance was beginning to be visited again by human emotions.

"I need no thanks, Mary" he said, in a low voice. "Thanks are for me, if you suffer me to think of you."

He came a few steps into the room, and shook hands with Mrs. Lyndsay, before he departed.

A few days after this visit a book-case arrived, exactly suited to Captain Lyndsay's small study, with an alphabetical arrangement on the shelves. It had long been a wish of Captain Lyndsay's to possess one, and indeed the disorder of his books would have attracted other eyes then Mr. Merivale's. This time it was accompanied with a note to Captain Lyndsay, making his excuses for the officiousness of the gift, and begging him to permit it for his daughter's sake. Captain Lyndsay bowed his pride, and wrote his acceptance. He felt somewhat of a martyr to Mary's prospects on the occasion; and the feeling restored complacency to his mind.

But to a disposition like Mary's this state of things could not long continue. She felt it to be equally wrong as regarded him and herself. She had besides that turn of mind to which suspense and uncertainty are the worst of evils.

Two days after the arrival of this second gift, she said suddenly to her mother, "Mother, do you and my father wish me very much to marry Mr. Merivale?"

"Well, Mary," replied Mrs. Lyndsay, who, unlike her daughter, never knew very clearly what her wishes were, "that is a difficult question to answer. Your father does very much, that I know; he thinks it would make us all happy, and so do I. I wish it very much too; and yet, Mary, when I remember what I was at your age, I feel differently. I know I would not *then* have married a rich ugly man, instead of your father, on any account. Not that

Mr. Merivale is old, nor yet ugly, quite the contrary; his features are particularly good; but then, Mary, on the other hand, as I sometimes tell you, it is a very little matter, in point of happiness, who one marries. It all comes to the same thing in the end. People who marry their first loves are not a bit happier than those who don't. So I have observed. So that, upon the whole, I always think the best is to take it as it comes."

"As to happiness, mother," Mary said, mournfully, "I don't think much about that now. Life is not what I thought it was. There are dreadful things in it. Perhaps, upon the whole, it is best not to be so very happy. I know when I was happy I never could bear to think about a future world. I liked this better. But now I sometimes think what a happy place that will be, where there is no care or death."

"So do I, sometimes, Mary," replied her mother. "It will be a very strange place, that is certain, and I can't quite fancy *how* it will be."

"Dear mother," Mary cried, suddenly rising and putting her arms round her mother's neck, "I sometimes think the best of this world will be, to try and make others happy; and so, if it will please you all, I will do it."

"Dear me, Mary! I am sure I don't know what to say in such a hurry. Yes, I suppose it will please us all very much; only that, goodness gracious! what I ever shall do without you, I don't know. We had better think about it a little more. There's no hurry just now."

But Mary felt otherwise. A restless impatience for decision was stirring up a fever within her. It was an unhealthful state of mind. Her spirits were agitated

and troubled, and she no longer saw clearly. She needed a wise and watchful friend to guide her, but this she had not. Under the pressure of melancholy and despondency, individual tastes and preferences die away, but as surely as they die, so surely, as long as man lives, they will revive again. It is not, therefore, in such moods that momentous decisions should be made; yet it is in such moods that too often they are so.

A few days afterwards, it was a bright February day, Mary went to call at Cleeve. Miss Merivale's melancholy reflections on human life were no longer distasteful to her; and though of late, ever since Frank's disgrace, she had been unwilling in any way to make a step towards Mr. Merivale, she had refrained from her visits with something of regret. She went this day from a fever of mind that could not be still. She longed for anything to bring repose to her weary spirits.

Miss Merivale received her with her usual grave kindness, and said it was long since she had seen her.

"I know it is," Mary said, sadly and without excusing herself. "Have you been very dull and lonely all this long winter?"

"If I have, I am used to it, Mary. Loneliness is no trial to me now."

"Do you never feel a longing to speak of all your troubles to some one who will care?" Mary asked, in an eager, passionate tone.

"My troubles are not many; if they press for a moment, I say, life is short; time is passing; Heaven is before me; what matters it how these fleeting hours appear? If life was our rest, we might have longings for better things; but with death before us, how little seem the trials of the way!"

Mary fixed her eyes upon her, drinking in her words. They were those true and yet somewhat stoical reflections that calmed and

soothed her now. Once they had been bitter, now she loved to hear them. "I sometimes feel what you say," she replied; "I sometimes long to be in a world where there is no disturbance and no care; but perhaps that is not what I ought to feel. Is it right to think so much of being at rest?"

"No, Mary," was the grave answer. "We should think of being in the presence of God, whose eyes can look on sorrow, but cannot rest on sin. It is an idle thing to dream of rest, unless we make ourselves fit for it."

The answer was severe, but it was healthier than musing on the valueless nature of earth; it stirred Mary's heart, and made its pulses beat with a quicker movement. "And that I do not," she said, with humble, cast-down eyes. "Miss Merivale, what should I do to make myself fit?"

"Pray," was her reply.

"I do," Mary said, tearfully, "but I wish I knew what to do in life."

"Good works, Mary."

"And what are they?" she asked, with eagerness.

Miss Merivale gazed at her, and a thought—a holy one, for it was for the saving of her brother's soul, and yet unholy, for not by such means should even a soul's salvation be sought—entered her mind. Some consciousness of its unholiness prevented its full expression, yet her meaning was clear:—"To care for others, Mary, their sorrows, and sicknesses, more than for ourselves; and to count all things loss, if we may but save one soul alive."

"I often think the same," Mary said, with passionate feeling, "and I will try and do it in my future life. Thank you, Miss Merivale, you have given me great comfort to-day."

Miss Merivale should have said, "Beware, Mary, of rash resolutions, even the best;" she should have said, "Nothing is good that opposes the first principles of right and wrong." She might have said, seeing as she did Mary's thought and resolve in her eyes, "Beware, Mary, even for the sake of that very soul's salvation, of entering on married life with a lie in your mouth." But Miss Merivale was too inexperienced in life to consider all the sorrows and dangers that might assail a marriage where love was not. She thought of her brother saved, and had no other thought.

There was emotion in her voice, and in her embrace, as she bade Mary good-bye.

At the gates of Cleeve, Mary met Mr. Merivale. He was riding, and at the sight of her, leaped from his horse with the buoyancy of youth.

It is perhaps impossible to over-estimate

the effect on human character, of hope, and interest in life, awaking after a long stagnation.

It is certainly possible for a callous matter to overgrow the living heart, gradually stifling every impulse that deserves the name of life. When this takes place it requires strong emotion to break it. Sometimes it is heavenly love that first melts the rigid iron, sometimes it is an earthly interest that softens and prepares for higher things; but whichever it be, the character may, under such influence, unstiffen and melt, the heart of stone be taken away, and a heart of flesh be given.

Mr. Merivale's love for Mary had not effected this work. A hopeless love is only in few cases an instrument for good. It was the new hope which had softened and changed him; and yet though changed,

who shall say that he was not as selfish still?

He came to her side, leading his horse. Her countenance was very sad, but her manner very gentle. "May I walk with you?" he said.

She acquiesced, and waited while he tied his horse to a tree. They then set forward along the road together.

"You have been to visit my sister!" was his first observation.

"Yes. I had not been for some time."

"How did you find her?"

"Good, as always," Mary said, earnestly, "but her life is dreary. It must be sad always to be alone."

"Her solitude," he replied, in a voice more of feeling than of bitterness, "is brightened by the presence of God. It is to be envied."

"It is, I suppose, what we should all try to have in our troubles."

"We should," was his answer, with great gentleness. "I hope we may!"

Mary had spoken some of the feelings that were now occupying her; almost unconsciously, perhaps, putting them forth to find sympathy, and his few quiet words had a greater effect in tranquillizing and drawing her mind towards him, than any of his expressions of devoted love.

Some natures cannot endure the stormy scenes of life. They desire the repose of calm sunshine and peaceful landscapes. Mary had the desire in a degree so great as to make even the uncongenial elements of her home pleasant to her. The gravity of her father, the insipid converse of her mother, the carelessness of her brother, were all soothing to her because they left her still. Such, too, had been Mrs.

Clifton's charm, and such, only blended with higher feelings, the influence of Alan Sinclair. It was the absence of this repose, in her intercourse with Mr. Merivale, that at times made her very soul rebel. Compassion deep and intense drew her towards him, but her nature shrank from him.

His gentle and quiet demeanour on this occasion laid her more to rest than was commonly the case in his presence. It prepared her still further to yield to him.

As they walked along, she, occupied and disturbed in mind, hit her foot against a sharp stone that lay in her pathway. The pain of it made her stop and wince. Mr. Merivale held out his arm for her to lean upon. Not willingly, yet with a feeling of duty, she accepted it, and walked a few steps with his

support. When the pain was gone, she withdrew her arm.

"Is my assistance painful to you, Miss Lyndsay?" he inquired, saddened at her abrupt movement.

"Oh! no," she replied, hurriedly, and scarcely knowing what she did, replaced her hand within his arm.

So docile she seemed, so gently and humbly submitting to his will, that he determined to venture once more; turning his eyes from the dreary darkness ready to gather round him, if this venture failed.

"Mary, have you ever thought of the words I said?"

His voice was calm; calm from the consciousness of the *all* he was staking on his words.

"Yes," she murmured.

There was no shrinking from him, and his hopes rose high.

"And is there hope, Mary?"

She paused—a long pause, to collect herself, and gather strength and courage for the final step. Had not his hope been high, he could not have endured the agony of that suspense.

At last she spoke, and with a mournfulness which, had he been as eager for her happiness as his own, would have plunged a dagger in his heart.

"You must not expect too much, Mr. Merivale. I have told you that my heart is buried in a grave; but if such a heart can make you happy, I will try to be to you what you will."

"My wife?" he said, in a tone of solemn inquiry, a light of joy indescribable playing over his face.

"I will try to be to you *all* you will," she repeated, unable to vary her words, yet speaking firmly and with emphasis.

He took her hand, pressed it to his lips, and vanished. Perhaps without definite consciousness of the fact, he yet knew that his emotions of joy and rapture were not for her.

Mary looked after him, grateful for his departure, touched with his considerateness, and for a moment soothed and blessed by the happiness she had given. Little as he had said, she had seen what it was; had caught the light of gladness shining in his face.

Without power at that moment to consider all that had passed, and all that she had undertaken, she went on to her father's room, put her arms round his neck, and said, "Father, it is done."

He scarcely dared to believe what her countenance told. "What, Mary?" he asked.

"Dear father, what you wish. I am to be his wife."

"My precious child!" he said, drawing her fondly towards him, "May God bless you and make you happy!"

"Happy, father!" she said, bewildered. With no such word had the event linked itself; it brought before her other dreams, and far other associations.

"Yes, Mary, happy," he replied, gravely. "At this moment you may not feel it, but I am fully persuaded that happiness, and great happiness, is in store for you. You deserve it, my child."

She kissed him, murmured "tell my mother," and hurried from him. Those words, that hope of happiness, had broken up the floodgates of sorrow, till this moment kept at bay by the excitement and fever of her mind. She flew to her room and threw herself on her knees in an agony of grief and remorse, and her prayer was not to God, but to the

memory of him who was no more. "Forgive me, forgive me, that I have seemed so soon to forget."

CHAPTER III.

"Matched ere yet her young heart spoke, with one
She cannot love, she'll give her love to duty."

Mr. Merivale called on Captain Lyndsay the following morning. To all questions about settlements he was perfectly indifferent. Mary was won, and the rival passion for the time being was banished to the bottom of the ocean. Whatever Captain Lyndsay proposed he agreed to. Mary's pin-money and jointure were to be on a considerable scale; as large, indeed,

as Captain Lyndsay had the conscience to ask. He invited him to his house in London, where he promised to appoint his lawyer to meet and confer with him; and the offer was accepted.

A fit of lumbago delayed the visit for a few days, and it was a week before it took place.

Mr Merivale's house was in no fashionable part of London, but it was a fine old house. It had belonged to his grandfather, and for that reason, even in his most economical moods, he had never disposed of it. In the week that had passed since his marriage was declared, it had already been made fit for Mary to inhabit. Necessity had forced him to paint and repair the year before. To beautify was therefore all that was required, and under the influence of lavish wealth, fast as the rising of a fairy

palace, the transformation was taking place. Papering, carpeting, furnishing, all this is rapidly done, and a week had changed the aspect of the house and made it, as newspapers say, "a princely residence."

Captain Lyndsay was dazzled. The substance of wealth was indeed what he desired to enjoy, but these outward signs were true tokens of the substance beneath, and his spirit expanded beneath the brilliant sunshine that seemed about to surround his latter days.

But Mary, meanwhile, drooped and faded. The excitement of uncertainty over, depression followed. It was not that she struggled with desires to retract what she had done. That was not in her nature. Her word given, her faith voluntarily plighted, it did not even occur to her to draw back; but the sense of duty that made her accept the future she had

chosen, could not animate it. She could not look forward with hope. Nay, her depression was so great that even to please her father and mother, and him whose happiness was now in her hands, she was scarcely able to force the bodily effort of a smile.

Captain Lyndsay saw her condition with pain, but looked on it in the light of a physical malady; and after some consideration determined to treat it accordingly. "Mary," thus he argued, "has been over-excited during the past year, and my poverty has prevented the experiment of those chances of amendment which physcians prescribe. Change of scene and habits is what she requires, and what greater or better change than to enter at once upon her new life, and take possession of her new abode?" His determination was therefore formed to hasten

the wedding day. He propounded the question to his wife, and, as was usual, received her acquiescence to his will. But though she agreed, Mrs. Lyndsay's heart was not in the marriage. She agreed with a pang.

The question was next addressed to Mr. Merivale. Captain Lyndsay put the case to him simply enough, and assured him that his reliance on his honour was sufficient, and made him indifferent about the arrangement of the legal settlements.

Mr. Merivale was well content, but he declined to press the point himself. He was, he said, in Captain Lyndsay's hands, desirous to act only for Mary's welfare and pleasure; that to which she agreed was that which pleased him best.

It was a considerate unselfishness, which Captain Lyndsay had not expected, but Mr. Merivale's object had already changed.

He had been content to buy love once; this satisfied him no longer. The nearer he drew to her, the more intensely he felt that it was her love he desired; that *he* should have power to bring back that sweet smile which first steeped his heart in blessedness; that he should be, not alone the object of her dutiful submission, but the husband of her affections.

For this he bent all his powers to win her. To this end he treated her with such a respectful and considerate gentleness as must in time attain its object; and though willing enough to have her all to himself, and to be enabled with ceaseless care to cherish her, he would not make one step to hasten the time without her will.

Captain Lyndsay was forced to act for himself. He considered the point again.

and then gravely and kindly spoke to Mary of his wish. He made no concealment. He told her he thought it for her good; he spoke of her depression as a habit that was dangerous to her future peace, and said that, after consideration, he thought any longer uncertainty might have bad effects upon her mind.

To the voice of good sense Mary's ears were always open, to her father's wishes her own will always submissive, and with something of anger at herself for the revulsion of feeling the proposal caused, she gave herself into his hands to do whatever seemed to him best. Having so agreed, she relapsed into the depression in which she had been found.

At the end of three weeks the marriage took place. The nearer prospect

seemed neither to rouse her to dread, nor to animate her to hope. In sad, unexcited gentleness, she lived on to the day before its celebration.

On the afternoon of that day, a letter from Mrs. Clifton was put into her hands. She was busy at the time with her mother, and with something of dread she put it aside till the evening. When she went to bed at night she opened it. It was short and cheerful.

"Rome, March 7th.

"My Dearest Mary,

"I am turning my steps homewards, and in the beginning of April I hope to be in London. My best hope in England is to see you again. Dear child, you have had a time of trouble, and I felt much for you, but it is over now, and why should we go back to what is past? I hope to find you well

and happy. I will let you know as soon as I come to England, and you *must* find time to pass some days with me in London. Tell your father it will be vain to refuse me, for if I am not allowed to have you by fair means, I will do it by foul. I have been to Jerusalem and other strange places, and prepare your ears, my dearest, to listen to me, for otherwise I may make a deaf woman of you for life. My letter is now at an end. It is a proof of rare love, I can tell you. Count it precious as such.

"God bless you, my dearest child,

"Your affectionate friend,

"M. Clifton.

"P.S. How is our gloomy neighbour at Cleeve?"

Mary laid it down, took up a pen, and answered it without a moment's pause :—

"My Dear Mrs. Clifton,

"Do not think harshly of me when you hear that I am married. I am going to be married to Mr. Merivale. I have been very unhappy, and my mind has been much troubled, but I hope now to have peace. I have tried to do what is right. If I have done wrong, may God forgive me for it! I am going to live in London. It is a great pleasure to think of seeing you again. I long for the time. Mr. Merivale is very good and kind to me.

"I am, dear Mrs. Clifton,

"Your most affectionate

"Mary Lyndsay."

Having thus made her confession, she threw the letters from her, and cast herself on her knees, burying her face in her hands. It was not for prayer, nor yet for abandonment to

sorrow; it was in defence against a rising agony. Mrs. Clifton's letter had come over her like a sweet breath of a former time; her own self, the Mary Lyndsay of old days, had flitted before her, and she herself had seen her former self with fear and longing. She knew not what she thought or wished, and knelt there speechless, not daring even to pray a prayer, lest, in her feelings of dread, and terror, and looking back, there now was sin.

But over such mute prayers the Eye that sees the beatings of the heart is watching, and to them also as to the voice of prayer, help and comfort come.

The following morning the marriage took place. Necessity, as well as Mary's wish, made it quiet, for the Lyndsays had few friends. Miss Merivale was there, sad and still, praying earnest prayers

for her brother's soul. And Frank was there, in a suit that looked somewhat too conscious of newness and freshness, and which already anticipating the £100 in an envelope, he had ordered for the occasion. He was the only gay one of the party. To him the prospect of having Mary rich, and in London, was a real delight; and he was disposed to forget all other considerations in that one. The rest were sad. Mrs. Lyndsay dissolved in tears, and Captain Lyndsay sad, even although he had attained his heart's desire.

CHAPTER IV.

A lovely form there sate beside my bed,
And such a feeding calm its presence shed,
A tender love, so pure from earthly leaven
That I unnethe the fancy might control
'Twas my own spirit newly come from heaven,
Wooing its gentle way into my soul!
But ah! the change—it had not stirred, and yet,
Alas! that change how fain would I forget!

COLERIDGE.

ON the afternoon of Mr. Merivale's wedding-day a gentleman entered his banking-house, and inquired of a clerk whether he could speak to him.

The visitor was thin and pale. One arm hung loosely and helplessly in a sling, and across his forehead, from the eyebrow to the roots of the hair, was the seam of a deep scar. These were disfigurements, yet they gave an added interest to an otherwise prepossessing appearance.

"You cannot speak to Mr. Merivale to-day, sir," replied the clerk, with a dry smile. "He is married to-day."

"Married, is he!" said the other, and a slight smile of surprise and amusement played over his features also. "Then when can I see him? My business is pressing."

"He comes to town, sir, to-day; to his house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, No. —."

"Well, I will spare him to-day," said the stranger, "but I must intrude upon him, wherever he may be, for a few minutes to-morrow. I will call in Lincoln's Inn Fields and say so; or stay, if you are sending

anything to him, send this card." He took a card from his pocket and wrote upon it.

"Major Sinclair is anxious to deliver a message to Mr. Merivale, from the late Captain Stewart, of the — Regiment. As the business is important, perhaps Mr. Merivale will be good enough to allow him a few moments' conversation at half-past eleven to-morrow morning. If Major Sinclair does not hear to the contrary, he will call at that hour, in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

"Major Sinclair.
4, Jermyn Street."

He gave the card to the clerk, and left the bank. Whether he spoke or not, his thought was, "Business first, and then —and then—."

The card was sent to Mr. Merivale

among other letters and papers. He had a large sum of Captain Stewart's, an officer lately dead in India, in his hands, and seeing that the business might naturally be pressing, he sent no denial to Major Sinclair's request. The name on the card failed to attract his attention. He had heard it, it is true, but under another form; and the card was laid aside without a thought.

At half-past eleven the following morning, with his punctual business habits, he was awaiting his visitor; and with equal punctuality, Major Sinclair, desirous to conclude his business, was at his door.

He was shown into Mr. Merivale's study, a room which, like the rest of the house, had undergone a transformation, and was now a handsome, suitably furnished room. He paused a moment

to examine his countenance. There was more curiosity and scrutiny in his gaze than the business he came on required. "Less morose than I had expected," was the soliloquy; and then, approaching him, he spoke at once of the affair that brought him.

It was respecting the immediate investment of Captain Stewart's money for the benefit of his orphan children; and Mr. Merivale entered into the subject with the quickness and shrewdness that belonged to him. Major Sinclair was favourably impressed with his qualities, both for quickness and integrity, and finding all perplexities vanish beneath his mode of treating the subject, was well content to leave it in his hands.

He thanked him, apologised for troubling him, shook hands, and crossed the room. In passing a table which stood

in the middle, his eyes fell on a drawing. It was Captain Lyndsay's water-coloured sketch of Mary, brought to London by Mr. Merivale, to be suitably framed and presented to her father.

The drawing had been done by a wandering artist, when Mary was about fifteen. The style was slight and rough; but by some momentary and happy inspiration, Mary's countenance, its sweetness, openness, and serenity, had been caught. It was Mary, half-smiling. There could be no mistake.

"Is that yours?" Major Sinclair paused and said; a pang beginning in jealousy, ending in agony, shooting through his frame.

A pang of a nature exactly similar stabbed Mr. Merivale. A thought, as it seemed, too horrible to admit, forced itself on his mind.

"It is a picture of my wife," he coldly and sternly said.

"Your wife?"

"My wife."

"Was it Mary Lyndsay to whom you were married yesterday?" was the question asked with fierce eyes fixed upon Mr. Merivale's face.

Every word came separately, as if the dread of the answer withheld the inquiry.

"It was."

There was a dead pause, while the joy of life took its farewell of each. Each felt the sudden clouding of a bright future, with a shiver of the body rather than the mind. In one mind hardness, in the other a kind of frenzy, for the moment banished sensation.

"Do you know that you have robbed me of my right?" Alan cried, passion-

ately. "Mr. Merivale, you must answer to me for this!"

"And who are you," replied his companion, with the coldness of his old self, "to whom I should answer for my deeds?"

"Mary's betrothed husband," was the reply; but there he paused; then in a low voice said, "Alas! no. I betrothed myself to her, but she was not betrothed to me. Forgive me, Mr. Merivale, it is not you who have to answer me. Could Mary so soon forget her once plighted love?"

"Is faith to be held with the dead?" said Mr. Merivale, with bitterness.

"With the dead! True, I was as dead. Forgive me, Mr. Merivale, I will detain you no longer." And like a person in a trance or dream, he passed on to the door and opened it.

"Your hat, Major Sinclair."

A glow of humiliation and anger crimsoned Alan's face. He returned to the table on which he had laid his hat, while drawing his papers from his pocket; took it in silence and departed.

It was in a whirlwind of amazement and desperation that he went forth; but passion, how vehement soever, nay, the more vehement it is, supports itself. The bitterness of grief was left behind.

Cold and hard as a rock of adamant, Mr. Merivale had remained during the presence of his rival, and no melting mood followed.

The heart of flesh so lately renewed within him began again to petrify. One thing only withheld it. A hope, faint yet fond, that during the past weeks he had wakened affection in the heart of his wife. He recalled the soft, sweet voice

with which that very morning, as she sat opposite to him at the breakfast table, she had inquired into his tastes; how she had risen before he was aware, had brought him his cup, and in answer to his remonstrance, had smiled and said that her father allowed it, and he must let her do as she pleased.

It was a small thing, too small almost to relate, and yet at the moment it had wakened in him an inexpressible feeling of happiness, and in memory he clung to it. As he stood there recalling the scene, a hand seemed to stay the petrifying process within, and a hope, soft and sweet as Mary's smile, to rise up and withhold him from despair.

The longer he dwelt on the hope, the stronger it grew. He reached that point at last when it nerved him for the performance of his task. Slowly he left

his room, and went in search of his wife.

Mary was sitting in the window of the large and luxurious drawing-room which now was hers. Comfort, a home look, had not yet been given—it was too new, too fresh—yet it had been decorated with taste, and the windows were large, and the room was airy and cheerful. Mary loved brightness, and the bright room in the sunny morning had not been without its influence in cheering her. Her new duties had begun, and none had ever begun them with a more steadfast purpose to do them rightly. That purpose is also cheering; and still more when there is a hope of being able to perform them. Her kind heart could not feel that a human being's happiness was in her hands without being stirred, and the consciousness that every effort would be accepted and

appreciated, is to effort an animating thought. These and other thoughts had cheered her, and roused her from her depression; and she was this morning in a more tranquil frame of mind than she had been for many a day.

And yet none could have seen her, as the picture of a young bride under twenty, without a feeling of sadness. In her best, her most cheerful thoughts, effort was present, and the life of effort is a life more toilsome than the labour of the body. Not one spontaneous thought went forward to meet her husband, not one glance pictured future days. To do her duty to him, thankfully and cheerfully, was the utmost of her hopes. This was visible on her countenance. It was calm and tranquil, but of the eager light of hope or pleasure there was not a glance.

She was seated in the window, for

once, idle. She was gazing out with a pensiveness that was quiet and serene. But where were her thoughts? Not in her new home; not on the new scene without; her thoughts were in a distant land; by an unknown grave. She was questioning herself, with her conscientious views of duty to her husband, how much her thoughts might now wander there. She was questioning, and was also answering herself; that he who lay in that distant land had become to her a friend whose memory she might cherish without sin. She was resolving that she would indulge in no longings or repining, would picture no more what might have been her lot, but from his image, to whom earthly cares were nothing, would gather strength to support herself in the trials of her way.

These were her thoughts! They might almost have been guessed from her air.

Her hands pressed together as if to still too much of thought, or else to accompany some unconscious prayer; her eyelids trembling with sorrrowful recollections, but a faint, sweet smile of resignation on her lips. These were her thoughts! Were they propitious to Mr. Merivale's hopes?

He entered the room, paused and gazed at her. She turned to him and smiled. The smile strengthened his hopes, and yet enough of fear was visible in his countenance to make Mary shudder as he approached her. She saw that gloomy expression of old days, which, in over-sanguine expectation, she had hoped was conquered for ever.

He drew nearer, and when at her side, still paused before he spoke her doom and his own. His pause was natural, but while he stood and gazed, his

brow contracted with the mingled anguish of hope and fear. Mary recoiled from him. Feelings, long banished, seemed to return and possess her, and she quailed before their re-awakening. Too conscious of the fact, yet mindful of her duty, she forced herself to be still, and gently inquired if he was uneasy or unwell.

"I have heard news that has shocked me," he said, grasping her hand, and terrifying her trembling heart. "Is it anything to you, Mary! *He*, that Alan Sinclair, is alive, and *here*."

Her startled eyes opened wide and wild, then closed in unconsciousness. So rapidly she fell, he had not presence of mind to catch her. One rush of blood to her heart, and she had fainted.

He was answered. Yet for a moment as he raised her, unknowing whether she were dead or alive, that answer did not reach

his heart. He laid her on a sofa, and hung over her, and pronounced, in a tone of fearful inquiry, her name.

But only for a moment could he think she was dead. The expression of her countenance had no peace of death about it. The lines of care and sadness were but too visible. She lived; but lived no more for him. He was answered;—and over his countenance slowly and gradually stole the hardness of utter despair. "My wife!" he might have said, with Othello; "What wife? I have no wife. Oh, insupportable! Oh! heavy hour!" for though bound to him by ties none could undo, her heart was another's.

He stood long without an attempt to restore or rouse her. All his better feelings, all the returning good dispositions of a once good nature, seemed one

by one to take their leave of him and depart; and in their place, jealousy, rebellion, and despair, three evil spirits that lead men to destruction, entered and took up their abode.

At length he carried her upstairs, laid her on her bed, summoned her maid, and left her.

Mary lay long in unconsciousness, but he made no inquiries after her. He shut himself up alone, abandoning himself to evil thoughts. It was, alas! too plain a proof how selfish had been his love, since no thought of pity for Mary occupied his mind, and yet, if sorrows could be weighed, her burden was as heavy as his.

Far different were the feelings of the young wife. Her first thought, on returning to consciousness, was perhaps of her own strange misery, but the second,

rapidly following it, was of pity for her husband; this was the thought that raised her up, and made the prospect of her life endurable.

Intense compassion,—like an angel's. For this she arranged her dress, and smoothed her hair, and washed her face, and banished the outward signs of misery.

Stifling her own agony, turning her eyes from it, she put herself aside till she had comforted him. She would have done so on principle, if she had thought; but here it was the spontaneous action of her nature.

When to her own eyes she had made herself like herself, she went to him, and for the first time timidly knocked at her husband's door.

He bade her enter, and with no thought but for him she did enter. It was a moment in which he might have

won her for ever,—a moment in which pity might have melted her heart to admiration, gratitude, and love.

But human beings know little of the opportunities in their hands. They go on their own wilful way, and many a fair and promising flower is crushed by man's blindness and rudeness. So it was now. At the first glance at that hard face, Mary's natural flowing pity was dried in its source. It was true nothing but suffering could have produced it, but it was not the kind of suffering which appeals to a youthful and tender nature's pity.

She did not draw back, but she proceeded with effort.

Holding out her hand to him, she said—

"Forgive me! Your words were so sudden, and so strange, they overcame me."

He was touched by her gentleness. He would not have been human otherwise; but he rebelled against his emotion as an enemy. What was to him, he said in his heart, the submission of a slave, and he stifled it in its first birth.

"There is nothing to forgive," he coldly said, dropping her hand. "We cannot command our affections."

Mary shrank back from his words. He saw it, writhed beneath it, but remained unchanged.

She knew not what to say, yet lingered on in some unconscious hope of a softer mood.

He was seated at his writing-table, and there remained, suffering her to stand at his side. Not that he could not have knelt before her to implore her love, but the demon of jealousy prevailed, and forbade him to humble himself.

"I disturb you, I am afraid," at last she sadly said.

"That cannot be," he replied, with bitterness. "We are at each other's commands. The vows that bind us are irrevocable."

"You must not distrust me," she said, stooping towards him, a tremulous earnestness in her voice and countenance.

"I do not, Mary. I know you too well." Yet even these words, which might have been kind, were spoken more in anger than in kindness.

Even yet, a look of yielding, a glance of compassion, and she might have been won; but it did not come. His own misery destroyed all sense of hers; and the opportunity was lost. She left him, and as she closed the door, she crossed her arms on her breast, and murmured, "Lord have mercy upon me!"

CHAPTER V.

"Jealousy is cruel as the grave."

That evening a letter was brought to her. She and Mr. Merivale were sitting together. The outward forms of life are little affected by those things which shake the inner life to the centre. They had met again without any allusion to what had passed, dined together, sat together. A throbbing head had in some degree stilled Mary's mental misery, but it made every word she spoke an effort.

Yet she did not dare to mention it, dared not ask to go to rest. Already she felt like a slave beneath his jealousy, that jealousy which was corroding the springs of feeling within him.

She sat up; straining her aching eye-balls to work, and now and then forcing a question from the dead void in her heart; and he sat opposite to her, with a paper in his hand — his eyes wandering without ceasing over one single line, yet, if unobserved, glancing with a glance of fearful inquiry at Mary's pale cheek.

It was while they were thus sitting, that a letter was placed before Mary. It was addressed, in characters that bore the trace of passion, "Mrs. Merivale."

Mary gazed at it. It was the first time she had seen or heard her new name, and it came over her like a new thing. The writing was not well known to her, she had rarely

seen it; yet well she knew what awaited her; not all her efforts could still the beating of her heart, or banish the flush of agony from her cheek. She pressed her hands on her brow, and then resumed her work. The letter lay before her untouched.

And well Mr. Merivale understood whence the letter came, and why it remained unread. But as if he loved to torture, he asked the question.

"I do not know," was her faint reply; the falsest words she had ever spoken, and as if even this her quick conscience reproved, she more faintly added, "but I guess."

"Read it, Mary. Do not let my presence interfere."

She stretched out her fingers and touched the letter, then shuddering withdrew them. And he the while was watching her movements with a look so expressive of the

torture they gave him, that could she have read it she must again have pitied him; but she was absorbed in other feelings now.

At last she took courage and said, "I must read it when I am alone. Forgive me this once."

He rose without an answer, and left the room; and the young wife laid down her aching head on the table and wept. For him she had lost all earthly joy, and thus he requited her. No pity, no help in her misery. These were selfish thoughts. Mary's desolation wrung them from her.

At length the letter was opened and read. It began with saying he had no right to upbraid her, she had done only what all women would do; but the cold sarcasm of the early words were shortly forgotten, as he poured forth his reproaches and despair. It was a cruel letter; every word was as a dagger's point; yet it could scarcely have

been expected to be otherwise. He must have been a hero, indeed, who, in his first burst of resentment, had conquered himself to excuse and comfort her; yet, in the midst of its cruelty, the love and trust he had borne, and still bore in and for her, were everywhere apparent. It was cruel at times in its reproach, but more cruel still at heart in its effects on her, in its expression of unchanged devotion. Whatever its words, they were the words of a warm, living, and loving heart; and as such, Mary's chilled and desolate spirit yearned towards it for sympathy.

Having read the letter, she lay back with closed eyes to think; her fingers clasping it with a grasp of affection. She suddenly rose up from her trance with a start of horror. Where had her thoughts flown? What dream had brought such stillness and repose over her soul? She clasped

her hands, and recalled her thoughts, and bade the temptation depart.

There was an answer to be written, it was due to herself and to him; yet what was to be said? She must write only what a wife might write; still further only what her husband without pain might read. She wrote at last only these few words:—

"You have some right to reproach me, yet not if all were known. I have tried to do right, and henceforth must strive more earnestly. We are parted now. So God has ordered our lives. Let us love His will, and try to be happy where He has placed us. Forgive me if I have done you wrong. God bless you, and farewell for ever!"

Cold words, perhaps, for his warm and wounded spirit; yet she felt no temptation to add more. These few words were enough to justify herself, and comfort him. So she

imagined, at least; feeling as she wrote them that they would find an answer in his breast. The very writing them composed her; in part from the submission she expressed, in part because they bore her away in sympathy with him; one an earthly, the other a heavenly feeling, both turning her from her own selfish troubles.

It was late when Mr. Merivale re-entered the room, and his solitude had brought no good to him. His brow was gloomier than before. But Mary was tranquillized, and with courage she said,

"I have read the letter and answered it." She placed both letters before him.

Again he might have touched and won her. One spark of generous trust, and she would have blessed him. But again he lost the opportunity. The craving desire to allay his tortures by discovering the extent of love she felt for her former

lover, extinguished the nobler promptings of his conscience. Alan Sinclair's letter, indeed, he cared not to see. He could imagine by his own feeling what was written there, and for that had no pity. His letter he returned in silence, the other he held for an instant doubtfully, then perused it.

They might be cold words for Alan's troubled spirit. They were not cold to him. Like Bluebeard's wife he had desired to see into the secrets of a hidden place, and his curiosity, like hers, was death, not life. The trust and submission expressed, told of regret more forcibly than words; no tale of love revealed could more entirely have assured him that his wife loved him not.

He returned the letter, she looking wistfully for a word, but receiving nothing.

Sadly and silently she took it, sealed

and directed it, and the same dead calm once more prevailed in the room.

In his letter Alan briefly alluded to the circumstances that had led to the supposition of his death. He was taken prisoner, after being disabled from his wounds, by a party of marauders, and probably, in the hope of ransom, had been carried far up the country. The state of his health, on reaching his resting-place, seemed, however, to preclude any such hope, and he owed his life to the intercession first, and then the care, of some woman, whose compassion he had excited. Of what followed he had no recollection, fever and weakness having effaced many weeks of life from his memory. On his return to consciousness, and gradually to some degree of strength, he effected his escape, and after many hardships arrived at Calcutta. He there heard of his sup-

posed death, and also of the change in his prospects. With health too shattered to remain in India, he resolved to proceed to England immediately, overland, but before his departure was again attacked by fever, and lay for many weeks between life and death. On his recovery, he was pronounced to be unable to take the journey overland, and he embarked in a vessel, which, after many accidents and mischances, arrived in England—for him too late. His letter concluded thus:—"I would not, while my life was doubtful, write to claim you, Mary, but when I despaired of life, in an interval of fever, I dictated a few words to assure you that I died unchanged; that in pain and captivity and loneliness the thought of your love and truth had supported and blessed me. But I lived. I thanked God for life then, but I cannot thank Him now. Would that I had left

my body in that distant land, and that my soul had gone to where the weary are at rest, for since *you* have failed me, there is no truth on earth to be found!"

The letter to which Alan alluded, and which she might have received a month before, was received by Mary many months afterwards.

CHAPTER VI.

"A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
Finding no natural outlet or relief,
In word, or sign, or tear."

COLERIDGE.

IT is not good, some writer says, to linger in the rack chamber of the human heart. The next three weeks of Mary's life shall therefore be passed over with few words.

They were passed alone with Mr. Merivale. Frank, by the kindness of the latter, was gone, as in his phraseology he expressed it, "on a lark to Paris."

Mary had scarcely an acquaintance in London, and no friends, and the few business acquaintance of Mr. Merivale thought it too early to intrude on the young wife. She passed her days, therefore, alone and unoccupied. Mr. Merivale, driven back from the rest he had sought for his restless heart, and unable to endure the torments of his jealous despair, returned anew to his old passion. Gradually it resumed its place. The displaced evil spirit found his heart empty of good thoughts, and returned to take possession. It was in somewhat of a new character, however, that it now returned. It was no longer the shrewd spirit of money-making that possessed him. It returned now like a fever. Mary's love could not be so displaced as to be instantly refilled with an idol of gold. It was the restless expectation, the chances, the dangers of specula-

tion, that now dissipated his thoughts ; into these he plunged headlong, and so occupied, left her to herself for the long day. They began their new lives each alone ; each doing their duty as they understood the word, but each living a life apart, no future hope or present interest wakening a chord of sympathy between them. They breakfasted and dined together. The intervening hours Mary was alone.

Alone and unoccupied. She who had been always at work ; caring for others, needful to others. Even if happily married, this want of occupation would have been felt, for an education is required for riches as well as for poverty, and the transplanted are not necessarily happy in their freedom from care. As it was, with only dangerous thoughts for companions, the trial was a grievous one.

In a kind of desperation, she betook

herself to reading, and the sad tone of her mind directed her to a kind of reading altogether new—religious reading. Beyond the simplest elementary books, such had never come in her way. She found her bookshelves in her new home fitted up with books of every description; these among others; and the study once entered upon absorbed her. The first book on which she chanced to lay her hand was the "Life and Sermons of Archbishop Leighton," and there was something in the tone of his thoughts which so harmonized with her depression that they wholly carried her away. Religious reading must be good, and there are few states of mind to which words so holy as those of Leighton can be misapplied, yet at this moment they were not healthy to Mary. She required to be braced and invigorated for the hard life that lay before her. The words she read, elevated

and soothed, but left her still in a diseased state. To endure the sorrows of life; to consider all the joys or sorrows of this world as matters of indifference; to do the duties assigned her with patience and look to heaven only for rest; these were the consolations she gathered, and they did console her; but something more was required; they did not meet her case. To her, words should have been spoken of animating sound. The work she had to do should have been set in definite terms before her eyes. She was in great temptation, so also was her husband; so also was another. It was not a time to dream of Heaven for rest, but to arm herself to overcome present evil with active good.

Yet her reading, as has been said, elevated her mind. It left her dreamy and depressed, but it sowed good seed by handfuls in the fertile soil given her by nature.

So passed three weeks. At the end of that time Frank returned from his tour, and this was Mary's first rousing.

"I say, Mary!" was his greeting one morning, as she sat alone and absorbed in her studies, "my eyes! you have got a fine house!"

His boisterous entry, the familiar tone, so carried Mary out of the dreary atmosphere she was breathing, that she burst into tears. It was like the first welcome dawn of morning, after a night of fear and nameless terrors.

"Oh! Frank, I am so glad you are come!" she exclaimed, rushing towards him, and embracing him with unaccustomed warmth and vehemence. She would have clung to him, such sympathy and protection she felt in his presence.

"My dear Mary!" he said, pleased, yet surprised, "you must learn to be more of

a stately lady now. These rushings about don't do for married women. My eyes! how smart you are, and what a fine room."

Mary blushed and seated herself, but she was still fluttering with pleasure. "When did you come, Frank? and what have you seen? Tell me all about it."

"I came at twelve last night. I thought that was too late for a call, so I went to bed; and this morning I waited till, you know who, was gone out. I have got a holiday to-day, that is, I took it. It wanted one day to the three weeks, and I was not going to present that to Mr. Merivale, or anybody else. So here I am, and at your service, if you please."

"Oh! Frank, I am so glad you are come," Mary repeated with all her former ardour, though she now sat still.

"That's what I am not. You must make poor old soul take you to Paris,

Mary; there is no doubt about that. You never saw such a place. I assure you when I came back to England I almost shut my eyes from shame. I was regularly ashamed of it; not that I told the French what I thought; oh! no, I boasted properly to them, but I'm full of shame to-day."

He wished, and expected, to rouse Mary to one of their old strifes regarding England's superiority; but her mind was wandering. He saw it, and returned to subjects of greater interest.

"Well, how are you, Mary? and how do you get on? and how does poor old soul do? and how do you like married life?"

Mary sat silent. She could not answer him.

Frank looked at her for some minutes inquiringly; then he said, and there was

real kindness in his voice, "I know about that, Mary; my mother let me know, but I was not sure whether you would like me to notice it. It's a bad job, I'm afraid. You don't look more like yourself than you look like Miss Merivale.

She was still silent, but tears fell from her eyes. She could not check them.

"It's a bad job, Mary," he said, comfortingly, "but you know what's done can't be undone, and it's no use to mope about it. Many unpleasant things happen to one in this world, but I don't see that it does any good to take them to heart. Have you been to the play?"

"No, nowhere," she replied, brushing her tears away, and trying to speak cheerfully, "but now you are come back Frank, it will be quite different. I am so glad you are come!"

"We'll go and see all the sights. I

mean you to ask for holidays for me; and I will take you about; or you shall take me, and spare my legs. We'll have great fun. It's one capital thing that you are so rich."

Mary rose and went to a drawer, and returned in a moment with £20 in an envelope. She gave it to him with something of her old smile. "It's not a £100 Frank, but will it do? I put it there for you the first day I had it."

"Thanks, Mary, you're a very good girl. Yes, it does supremely well; particularly acceptable just at this moment. Come, cheer up, Mary, you see it's very pleasant to be rich."

Mary reseated herself, but the momentary animation was past, and the expression of joylessness returned to her face. Frank looked at her, then took up the book that lay beside her seat. "Hey-day," he said, "this is dreary work."

"Not to me," she said, so sadly that Frank looked at her still more earnestly; and an expression of thought that was not common to him gathered on his face.

"I say, Mary," at last he exclaimed, as if he had been ruminating, and had made up his mind, "I saw poor Captain Sinclair this morning."

Mary's heart leapt at the name, as she had never expected it to leap again, and a torrent of blood rushed to her face. She did not speak, however, but nervously clasped her hands together.

"I was not sure if I should tell you, Mary, but on the whole I think it best. I met him quite by chance."

Still no question.

"Don't you want to hear about him?" Frank asked, a little angrily.

"Wish! but oh! Frank, is it right?"

"Of course it is. He has not been—

I don't mean to blame anybody—but he has not been—that is, he can't feel himself particularly well used, and the least you can do is to pity him."

Oh, Frank!" she cried, passionately; then pausing and commanding herself. "If it is not wrong, and I am sure I can't think now whether it is or not, it *would* comfort me to hear how he is."

"I will tell you," Frank said, with importance. "I saw a person at Paris, in a shirt with a particular kind of spot on it, a very small, neat thing, that took my fancy; and I asked him where he got it. He told me in a shop in Piccadilly, so while I was waiting till it was time to come to you, I went to see after these shirts, for I am badly off for shirts at this moment. I found what I wanted, and while I was looking at them, who should come in but Captain Sinclair, or Major Sinclair, as

he now is? He was come after a large black silk handkerchief for a sling, for I suppose you know, Mary, that his arm, the left arm as good luck would have it, is all shattered to bits."

"Is it?" Mary said, her heart swelling with mingled feelings of pride and sorrow.

"Yes, and he has got a great, deep gash all across his forehead; but don't look sorrowful, that's no harm. Men like those things, at least I am sure I should; it looks well, hero-like. Well, he did not see me, and I began to be afraid I should not speak to him after all; so I chose two shirts of the kind I mentioned, in a great hurry, and said pretty loud, that they were to be sent to Mr. Frank Lyndsay, with my direction. He looked round then, I promise you, and got as red as that table-cover out there; but for a moment I thought he did not mean

to speak, after all my pains, and I felt I had better not push up to him if he did not like it. However, after thinking about it, he came a few steps towards me, and held out his hand. I felt a little queer, but nothing that happened was any fault of mine; so I got over it, and I asked him how he was. He said, "Quite well," rather coldly, so then I added in haste, that I was sorry to see his arm, and I hoped it did not give him much pain. He said "None," so then I said "That's a good job," and then we came to an end, for he said nothing more, and I had nothing more to say. So I said good morning, and came out of the shop, and I was glad to get away; for somehow or other I felt guilty. Though *I* have no reason, I am very sure."

Mary sat with her eyes fixed, drinking in the words, though they were daggers to her soul. Then there arose a longing to

see him, so intense that for a moment she almost started up with a prayer to Frank to take her where she could speak to him. But the involuntary longing was stilled as quickly as it arose, and she only said, "Thanks, Frank, for telling me all. I think it will do me good to hear it."

"You have no message, I suppose," he suggested, "in case I meet him again."

"No, none," she replied, again overcoming a strong temptation, "I am nothing to him, and he is nothing to me now."

"It is a curious state of things, Mary," Frank observed, after some thought. "I don't pretend to understand the government of the world—it is quite beyond me—but I must say it seems to me a curious thing that you and Captain Sinclair, who might have been so particularly happy together, should not have been allowed to be so, just from a mischance

It is a very great pity, that's what I think, and I can't thoroughly understand why such things happen."

"Ah, Frank!" Mary said, "but I can. I know now how much too fond I am of being happy, and how little, if I could but be happy, I should care for other things. All that has happened is very good for me, if only I can make it good, and that is by doing what I ought. But it is hard," she added tremulously, and two or three large tears fell from her eyes.

"Come, Mary, don't cry," cried her brother, "of all things in the world I most hate to see a woman cry, and what *is* the use? We all have our discomforts and disappointments, and the only thing is to get over them as well as we can. I shall come and cheer you very often, and we will go and see all the sights. So as you don't cry, I don't mind how often I come;

for I like you as well as any woman I know; and besides Mary——," he paused, as if a little unwilling to make the confession, but continued, after a moment's, consideration, "though I say I have had nothing to do with this business, I sometimes think I had, by what you did for me. That brought it all up again, and I shall not forget that; and so anything I can do to cheer you, I shall be glad to do." He ended by patting her shoulder, and kissing her with great kindness.

In spite of many thoughts of longing and repining excited by his words, Frank left his sister comforted.

His visit seemed in every way good, for it furnished her with conversation for her husband, prepared her to thank him for the pleasure he had given, and gave her an opportunity of making some requests which hitherto she had had no heart to

make. She almost looked forward to his return, that she might meet him with cheerfulness, and cheer him as she had hitherto had no power to do.

But her hopes were vain. She did, indeed, all that she had intended; but his jealousy, a jealousy encouraged and cherished, was not thus easily assuaged. He saw her cheered, and asked himself who had done it. *He* had had no power; was it the mere sight of another face that had thus enlivened her? What was it to him to have her for his wife, if all but he had power to bless her? He met her thanks with coolness, her attempts at conversation with gloom, and in her requests to be allowed to go out in Frank's society, acquiesced with indifference. Again an opportunity was lost.

CHAPTER VII.

"And sure there seem of human kind,
Some born to share the solemn strife;
Some for amusive tasks designed
To sooth the certain ills of life."

SHENSTONE.

"MRS. CLIFTON," announced Mary's servant, throwing open the drawing-room door with a feeling of pride and relief. The dull and joyless life of his new mistress was not at all what he had been accustomed to. The fashionable air of the present visitor

appeared to him an omen of better days.

Almost before she had set her foot in the room, Mary sprang towards her guest. With much of the feeling with which an old man looks back on the friends of his youth, Mary's heart bounded towards the acquaintance of her happy days; and, yielding to the impulse that led her, she threw herself into her arms.

The cordial greeting touched Mrs. Clifton, and the awkwardness and doubt, which for three days had made her question the possibility of a visit to Mary, vanished.

"You dear child," she said, with more real feeling than was common to her, "do you know I had been afraid of you; but I find you still the same."

Her words recalled Mary to herself. The glow of pleasure vanished from her

cheek, and the girlish warmth from her manner. She stood before Mrs. Clifton in her new self, sad, pale, and subdued; and with the grace and self-possession that her new self had given her, making her, what Mary was made to be, always fitted to her place, she took her across the room, and seated her in a visitor's proper situation.

Mrs. Clifton watched her sadly. She saw that the moment's warmth and excitement had been but forgetfulness; that what she now saw was the true Mary. She felt sadder than ever in her life she had done; but, true to her nature, conquered the sadness, and cheerfully began:

"Why, Mary, you Princess! This is a change, indeed. How magnificently you are lodged! Do you know I could envy you!" and with something, indeed, of envy, her eyes glanced round the

room, acknowledging its height, brightness, and good proportions, and at the same moment, with natural quickness, perceiving the value of some old-fashioned, yet handsome, pieces of furniture.

"Is it really a fine room?" Mary inquired, a native tact prompting her to show an interest in her new abode. "It seems so to me; but I am nothing."

"It is really a fine room, my love. I have seen many fine drawing-rooms; but the shape and size of this pleases me as well as any I ever saw. Do you take pleasure in it, Mary?"

"A small room is my idea of comfort," Mary said, with a faint smile and a faint blush; "but that is all habit. I daresay I shall soon change."

"Are you happy here, Mary?" was the next sudden inquiry of her guest; and she fixed her eyes scrutinizingly on her

as she spoke. Mary puzzled her. Changed as she was, the quiet dignity of her manner seemed to speak of one accommodated to her new position.

"I have been very unhappy," Mary replied, a darkened shade overspreading her features. "One does not soon forget such things as I have suffered. You must not ask me that question yet, dear Mrs. Clifton."

"I will not, then. Is your brother in London, or your father and mother?"

"Frank has just come back from Paris. Mr. ——" she paused; then, with tremulousness, she forced herself to say, "My husband kindly sent him there. He is delighted with all he saw."

"I daresay. Mr. Lyndsay and I will have a talk over our travels."

"You promised to tell me about yours," Mary cried, glad to escape from

herself. "Yours must be quite new. I long to hear about them—about Jerusalem especially."

"Then you shall hear, Mary, to your heart's content, Half the pleasure of my return is lost, because I cannot find anybody who cares about what I have seen. All have got their own businesses, as, indeed, I know I have had, when other travellers have come to me."

"I think not. *You* always listened, Mrs. Clifton, and I am sure I should like to listen now."

A good listener—not only a patient one, but an interested one—is a rare thing, as Mrs. Clifton had found, and most people know; but she had found one now. The zest for happiness, the desire to be relieved, was so strong and natural in Mary, that, in spite of the oppressing misery of her lot, she put it

all aside to follow Mrs. Clifton in her strange narrative. With brightening eyes, and an eager countenance, she sat by her, her few but apposite questions carrying on and inspiriting the narrator.

All Mary's early charm in Mrs. Clifton's eyes was rekindled; and, in spite of being in London, and having there a numerous acquaintance, she felt that her society was essential to her happiness. As she rose up, after her long visit, she told her so; and, with words so winning and cordial, that they found swift entrance into Mary's desolate heart.

"You will come and see me, Mary, will you not, and dine with me, and I will show you all that is to be seen in this strange land, and tell you more about other strange lands."

"I will ask Mr. Merivale," Mary said. "I think he will have no objection. I

should like it myself more than I can tell you."

"That is a dear child. I live in Park Street, a good way from here, but nothing with a carriage, and that you have, of course."

"Oh, yes, everything." The everything was most sadly spoken, almost with a sigh.

Mrs. Clifton looked at her again, considered for a moment, and then said, "Mary, forgive me if I ask you one question. Have you seen," she hesitated, ... "Alan Sinclair?"

She cast down her eyes, and nervously pressing her hands together, murmured, "No."

Mrs. Clifton saw, and needed no more words to tell her Mary's history.

"But he is in London, Mary. I have not seen him, but I hear he is."

"I know," Mary replied with effort, "Frank told me."

"What I mean, my dear child, is this. We may meet him. London is a large place, and yet there is no safe-guard against meeting friend or enemy. If you met him, what should you do?"

"I should try to bear it as well as I could," she replied, tremulously.

"Oh, Mary," said her rash friend, "what happiness you have thrown away!"

Mary made no answer, she could make none. She stood struggling with the agony her sense of duty commanded her to conceal.

Her duty was done, for the wild burst of passion was subdued; yet but little of the struggle was concealed.

"Forgive me!" Mrs Clifton said, putting her arms round her and kissing her, and as the kiss was given, feeling on her cheek Mary's scalding tears.

She said no more, but hurried away.

"I am come from a broken heart, if ever there was one," she exclaimed, to a lady whom she visited immediately afterwards. "I told you yesterday the story of Alan Sinclair. I have been to see his false love. False! poor girl! as true as ever woman was, but married to another. I feel most murderously inclined. I could murder father, mother, brother, and husband willingly, with these hands, and think it no crime."

"Was she married then against her will?"

"Worked upon, I suppose, poor child, while she was grieving for Alan Sinclair's death. Wrought upon by pity, perhaps, an old story. Well, the world is a strange world. Here are these two poor things miserable, and all because a vessel arrived a day too late."

CHAPTER VIII.

"What is the difference between being good and bad? The good do not yield to temptations, and the bad do."

MY NOVEL.

"WELCOME, Major Sinclair," exclaimed Mrs. Clifton, as Alan entered her drawing-room two days afterwards. "You have been like a Scotch sprite, heard of on all sides, but never seen."

"Have you seen Mary?" he asked, grasping her hand.

"Ah!" she replied, gaily, "I might have guessed how it was. No thought of me in

your visit. Should auld acquaintance be forgot in this way?"

"I should have thought of you, Mrs. Clifton, if I had had room in my head for any thought but one, but I have not. Tell me, have you seen Mary?"

"Come and sit down, and I will tell you what you please. I can answer no questions while a man stands gaunt and tall before me. Come," she continued, placing a chair for him in a convenient position to her own, "let us make ourselves as comfortable as we can, in this uncomfortable world."

The tone of gaiety in which Mrs. Clifton spoke, was for once assumed. With gaiety she endeavoured to shake off her dread of Alan Sinclair's visit. The tale of his and Mary's sorrows had fastened with an unaccountable grasp on her mind, and she could not free herself from fruitless regrets, and as fruitless wishes.

Alan obeyed her and seated himself, all the while with eager eyes awaiting her answer to his question.

"How changed you are!" she said, fixing her observant gaze upon his countenance.

"Yes," he replied, glancing down on his shattered arm, "but it matters nothing. I never cared about losing it."

"I did not mean that," she replied kindly, "I should not so lightly have spoken of that. Whatever loss it may be to *you*, in other eyes, especially a woman's eyes, it is only an ornament."

He smiled faintly and indifferently, and said, "How then am I changed?"

"You do not look like yourself. I suppose I should have known you, but I am not sure." Mrs. Clifton was right. His countenance had been peculiarly sweet. He looked now like one who was submitting to disappointment in no submissive or Christian

spirit. There was a fierce, restless look about him.

"Will you answer me now, Mrs. Clifton?" he inquired, leaving her remark unnoticed. "Have you seen Mary yet?"

"Yes, I saw her two days ago."

"Well," and the fierceness of countenance deepened in intensity.

"Do you know you frighten me?" she said, laughing again, to conceal he rdiscomfort in this interview. "Ask me any questions you like, but do not look as if I was to blame."

"Oh! Mrs. Clifton, forgive me. You know, or should know, that all my hopes in life have been swept away at one blow. It was a cruel stroke. You should pity and help me. I want to know if Mary is reconciled to her lot, or if she is miserable as I am."

"I should say miserable as you are; but she did not tell me so."

"Ah! I feared it; from her letter I feared it, and it is that that makes me mad. Mad," he repeated, stamping with his foot.

"No, Major Sinclair, you must excuse me for contradicting you, but I don't think it is Mary's misery that makes you mad. I don't believe ever human being went mad at another's pain. And more than this, I believe, on the contrary, that you are comforted by what I said. You would have been more mad if I had told you she was happy."

He smiled at this for a moment, but the smile faded as he replied, "What makes me mad is to think that the fault was mine. Why did I not write when I got free, and tell her that I lived, and was coming to claim her?"

"Why did you not?"

"I was at that time like one between

life and death. I thought death probable. I would not write, or allow her to be written to. I feared to waste her life with racking anxiety. Later, when I thought I was actually dying, I did write, but I fancy the letter was lost. My care for her has been well rewarded."

"Well, I confess the reward is a strange one," said his companion, "but no doubt it is for the best. Everything is, we are told."

"Why did she do it, Mrs. Clifton?"

"I was curious about it as your are; and meant to have questioned Mary, but there is something about her that made me afraid. She evidently would conceal her misery if she could, and tries to seem like a good wife, only, poor child, she cannot. Failing therefore with her, I sent yesterday for Mr. Frank Lyndsay, and he enlightened me."

"I met him, but I could not talk to

him," Alan said. "What was his history?"

"It appears that Mr. Merivale wished to marry Mary before you did; a week or so before you, Frank Lyndsay said, and though Mary would not hear of it, her poor pitiful heart was touched even then. Frank said he proposed the very day his mother died. Do you remember, the day after, what a trembling, nervous state she was in!"

"Ah! yes, well," he replied, a flood of tender recollections softening his countenance.

"I was pleased with Frank Lyndsay. He seems sincerely sorry for his sister, and he told me a circumstance which he fears was one great cause of bringing Mr. Merivale's proposal forward again. In strict confidence I repeat it to you." She here mentioned Frank's misdemeanour and its

consequences. "The fact is, they all thought it a good marriage, and made Mary do it; and she being miserable, poor thing, and seeing him miserable, gave away. That, I suppose, is the long and the short of it. An often told tale, easily explained, but not less sad. There," she said, opening a little box, "there is the note she wrote me, the evening before her wedding day."

Alan read it again and again in silence. At length he looked up and said, "Mrs. Clifton, I must see Mary."

"How?" she asked.

"You must manage it for me. I *must* see her. I really cannot answer for inyself, if I do not."

"I will do anything that is for your happiness or hers—but is this? I have my doubts."

"Happiness," he said, bitterly. "No, I do not expect it would make me happy to

see her; to see her lost to me for ever. It is not for happiness, but to give rest to our minds and brains that I ask it. Day and night," he said, clenching his hands as he spoke, "I am addressing her; fancying my meeting with her; reproaching or comforting her. If she suffers in any degree like me, she must suffer the same. Let us have rest from this. Let us say what we have to say, and then part for ever."

"I think you are right," Mrs. Clifton replied, after a short consideration, "and I will do what I can, but I very much doubt if Mary would consent to meet you. From what I gather through Frank Lyndsay, I should suppose Mr. Merivale is jealous; no wonder, poor wretch! I do not think Mary would do it."

"I *must* see her, Mrs. Clifton. Bring her here, and let me see her—that is all I ask. I ask it for her as well as

myself. If she feels like me, she must feel that anything is more bearable than the torment we now endure. Promise me to do it."

"Well," she said, thoughtfully, "I don't know why I should not. I believe your view is right; and as I do not think she would dare to consent, if she knew what was intended beforehand, it had better be done without her knowledge. I will ask her to come to luncheon on Saturday—to-morrow I am engaged. I will let you know if she accepts. Will that do?"

"I feel, Mrs. Clifton," Alan said, as he rose to go, "that I ought to say much in apology to you for troubling you with these miserable concerns of mine. I know how painful it must be to you; but to whom besides can I go!"

"I will make no pretty false speeches," she said, laughing, "it *is* painful to me;

and I heartily wish I had never had anything to do with match-making between you and Mary. But since I had, I must take my share of trouble. Only promise me that when I have done this good deed for you, you will clear that cloudy brow and be yourself again."

He shooks hands without answering, and left the room.

Consideration in no degree changed Mrs. Clifton's purpose. On the contrary, consideration made her excited, until she could perform her promise. She thought there could be no peace for either until they had met, and for her own sake as well as theirs, she longed for anything that could bring peace to their careworn faces. Her note was written to Mary within half an hour of Alan's departure.

That very evening brought a ready and grateful acquiescence. Poor Mary

had no engagements, neither of pleasure nor business to occupy her, and as thankful as a child from its tasks, she looked to an escape from the pain of her ceaseless thoughts.

She arrived with the over-punctuality of the idle, but her hostess was ready, and had long been ready; in some eagerness, and in some trepidation, awaiting the result of the visit. She had no scruples, for she was certain it was for the best, but she would not have been human had not some vague terrors unsettled the equable pulses of her mind.

Had Mary been observant, she would have perceived that Mrs. Clifton was not quite herself; that at a knock or a ring a slight colour mounted to her cheek, and that she repeated some anecdotes of her late tour, which, word for word, had been

told at her last visit; but the depressed are very rarely observant, and she was too happy to be cheered and made to laugh, to quarrel with a twice-told tale.

In perfect peace, therefore, she sat and listened and talked, and finally followed Mrs. Clifton to the drawing-room.

"And now, dear Mary, sit down here," Mrs. Clifton said, wheeling a low comfortable chair away from the window, and placing her in it. "I have a little business, and you will excuse me, I hope, for leaving you. You see I treat you just as I did Mary Lyndsay."

"Thank you for that," Mary said, with a smile.

"I hope you will have something interesting to occupy you," she added, in a tone which for her was grave, as she left the room.

The grave tone caught Mary's attention

for a moment, but when the door closed, she sat down, and fell into a reverie. The languid repose of thought was now become a habit too strong to be resisted when alone. She was thankful to be driven from it, but had not the energy to drive herself.

The door by which Mrs. Clifton had disappeared slowly re-opened. Mary raised her eyes, and Alan Sinclair appeared before her.

She started up. For a single instant the present was forgotten; a wild cry of joy *almost* burst from her lips; *almost* she sprang forward to meet him, as Mary Lyndsay might have done.

But it was not so. The innocent, the steadfast in duty, are not abandoned in moments of weakness. If it must needs be that they go into temptation, they are delivered from the evil.

Before she could look a look, or speak a word which might afterwards trouble her tender conscience, a thought was wafted through her mind, "I am another's;" vaguely and mistily, yet it was enough to arrest her steps; and silent and motionless she awaited him.

No thought of duty, no thought even of *her* inconstancy and *his* misery, had Alan at that moment. He saw only Mary, thought only of her presence, and as he grasped the hand which she mechanically held out on his approach, he pronounced in tones of unmingled tenderness her name.

And again Mary's brain was bewildered. There was such joy, such protection, such sympathy in his presence, that her life and being seemed to dissolve and melt away into his; but again, before the bewildered mind could by a movement betray

itself, the same thought flitted before her, and this time so vividly was it presented that instinctively she acted on it.

"You must not call me by that name," she said, faintly yet audibly, and withdrawing her hand, she stepped backwards, and separated herself from him. "I am nothing to you now."

For a moment Alan stood awed and abashed, then he bitterly and passionately said, "Oh, Mary, you never loved me!"

"I know it must have seemed so," was the sad and humble reply.

"No, Mary, it is not true," he cried, touched and transported by the dejection of her air, and the sad confession words and looks alike conveyed. "You did and do love me; even at this moment," and he drew nearer, and looked in her face, with a look that seemed to ask the secrets of her soul, "you still love me."

"Dare not to tempt me," she cried, almost fiercely, and again stepped backward.

And again he paused, awed and conscience-stricken; and more conscience-stricken still, when Mary added, in heartrending accents, "You ought to pity and help me."

"How can I, when I have lost you? Oh! Mary, why did you forsake me?"

"Not in forgetfulness," she said, speaking low and fast and tremulously, "but in too strong memory. I knew I could not be happy. I thought I would forget myself, and make others happy. It was presumption, and God has punished me. Forgive me, for I cannot forgive myself." She dropped her face in her hands, and wept bitterly. Pitifully and reverently, Alan then approached her, and endeavoured to draw her hands away; but she recovered her self-control, and loosening herself from

his grasp, added, "But not the less, it becomes us now to submit to God's will, and I do submit."

"*Goa's* will, Mary! was it His will?"

"I cannot tell what it *was*, but I know what it *is*. And with His help I will do His will, and be a true and faithful wife as long as I live." Her eyes flashed as she spoke, and her voice was strong and clear as her resolve. Her self had come back to her.

"And I, Mary!" Alan said, gazing at her with a look more of admiration than of love. "What shall *I* be as long as I live?"

"Is there nothing to comfort you? What can you do?" she said softly, a pitying tenderness in her voice that was no longer afraid to show itself.

"I cannot tell."

"It must be, then, *your duty*, Alan."

"My duty, Mary?" ironically, "that is a broad, vague word. What is my duty?"

"Have you *none*?" in a tone of tender sympathy.

"None, at present at least. This shattered body is useless now."

She closed her eyes, and clasped her hands, and continued, reflecting as she spoke, "Your uncle . . . Are you not now . . . ."

"Yes, Mary," he bitterly replied, "I am."

"And is *he* not miserable?" putting forth his misery as a shield against her own.

"Yes, I believe he is; no doubt he is."

"Then *there*—is not your duty there? You might carry comfort there, you might be a son to him."

"I might," was the half-doubting, half-languid reply.

"Oh, Alan! go then, and be sure *there* you will find comfort and peace. It is not safe to be alone and miserable; be thankful that you may go and comfort him. Dear Alan, go," she added, forgetting all selfish thoughts, fears, or scruples, in her intense anxiety for him.

"Mary, my good angel, God bless you!" he said, clasping her hand. "I know you are right, and I will do all you advise—even, even—though—it carries me far from you."

"That must be whatever came," she said, gravely, rising from her seat. "We could not meet like strangers, as friends it might not be. I do not say forget—for that will only come with time, but think of me as a wife; and I, only as a wife may, shall think and pray for you." She held out her hand.

He took it, seeing in her air the

steadfast resolution to be gone; but he held it a moment as he said, "Mary, do you forgive me for this day's meeting?"

"I do," she replied.

"Was it pain, or has it comforted you?"

"Pain, and yet comfort," she gently said.

"And so also to me; and now God bless you!" He gazed in her face, bent forward, kissed her brow, and departed without another word.

Mary sat down and buried her face in her hands. There she sat unconscious, while prayers that had no words rose up for herself and him.

Mrs. Clifton left her for some time by herself. She heard of Alan's departure, though he did not return to her, but she had a reverence for this grief of Mary's that withheld her from intruding.

She did not return to the drawing-room till she felt it would be best for Mary that she should return.

She then went to her, put her arms round her, and said, "Can you forgive me, Mary? Have I done wrong?"

Mary returned her embrace, but did not immediately answer. "You frighten me, my dear child," she hurriedly cried, "have I done you harm?"

"No, Mrs. Clifton, no," she replied, gently; "as it is, you have given me comfort, great comfort. I have been helped, mercifully helped to do right; but another time, for others I say it, do not lead the unhappy into temptation."

Her words affected Mrs. Clifton with a strange sensation—bringing before her the awfulness of *responsibility*, as she never had felt it before. "I will not," she gravely said.

"Perhaps," she added, an instant afterwards, "I should not even now have acted so towards all, but I knew I could trust you, Mary."

"I am weak as others are," Mary replied, with quivering lips and tears gathering in her eyes.

"I meant it for comfort, I thought it was for the best. Be sure my motive was good, Mary."

"I am sure of it," and Mary kissed her with warmth. "And you have comforted me. Thank you for it."

CHAPTER IX.

"Then give me leave to read philosophy."
TAMING OF THE SHREW.

BUT little more was said on the subject of Alan or his visit. Mary had been engaged to drive with Mrs. Clifton, and she, anxious to dispel any grief she might have caused, and to do away any harm she might have done, pressed her to hold to her engagement; yet scarcely expected an acquiescence. But Mary gave it. Her conscience warned her that solitude was

no safe state for her that day, and its warnings were never consciously unheeded. It was hard enough to battle with an unwilling sin. She would add no load she could avoid.

They went out together into the Park. The air and the bustle of the streets, in the very fulness of the season, soon rolled from Mrs. Clifton's mind the weight that had oppressed it, and she endeavoured to cheer and amuse her young companion as was her wont. And the willing mind, even under its load of misery, consented to be cheered. She looked at and admired the beauties pointed out for her admiration, the celebrated characters marked for her notice, listened to the flow of her lively conversation, and suffered herself to be amused.

"Do you know the whole world of London?" she asked, at last, having watched

with surprise Mrs. Clifton's bows to that gay crowd that was so strange to her.

"Pretty nearly, my dear child; I don't know how it is, but day by day my acquaintance increases, and if I would I have not the power of stopping it. When I went first into the country, and then abroad for two years, I thought I should be forgotten—but I come back, and find myself the same as before, the universal friend, acquaintance, and confidante."

"I don't wonder at it," Mary said, smiling.

"Don't you, Mary? But I do. My lot is a subject that, thoughtless as you may sometimes think me, causes me a great deal of gratitude, and some little moralizing. Do you like to hear my moral reflections on my life, and human life in general?"

"Very much. They will not be gloomy reflections, I know."

"Quite the reverse. My first reflection, Mary, is that lots are much more even than is generally supposed. That that which is withheld from us is generally counterbalanced by some other valuable gift. Now, look at my lot in one light; it seems a melancholy one. A widow;—left a widow at under thirty;—and alone;—with no child, no father or mother, or living brother or sister, or, except a niece who has plenty of other cares, any relation on whom I can say I have a claim. With money, indeed, but no relation whom I can make happy by it. Now, dear Mary, just consider my words; so stated, do you not think mine is a melancholy lot?"

"Yes, indeed; but I never thought of you in that way before."

"No. Because things are made even.

Here am I, this lonely widow, never necessarily alone; everybody seems to like me; many seem to love me; I am sought out, flattered, courted, confided in, find myself wanted by one, missed by another, consulted by a third; at fifty as much an object in the world as ever I was when I was young and handsome. Now, does not this make one reflect, Mary, and ought it not to make one grateful?"

"I don't wonder at it," Mary repeated, as she had done before.

"It *is* wonderful, though, and I often wonder how or why it is. I lay it all to one or two reasons. The first is, I am always at leisure, and in this busy world it is a great comfort to find a person at leisure,—at leisure to listen to and to feel an interest in anybody's cares, be they small or large. Another is, that I never have grievances myself, and

believe me, Mary, that is a great thing in gaining popularity, and even a better thing—affection. I never have grievances myself. I do not allow their existence. 'What can't be cured must be endured;' and what must be endured I don't fret about myself, or worry others with. And for the grievances of others, I listen to them, but I roll them away. Somehow or other they melt away in my presence. There may be other causes, but depend upon it these are the chief ones, and I give you good advice, Mary, when I tell you, if you need the warning, to follow my example when you come to be a middle-aged woman like me."

"I hope I shall," Mary replied, with humble earnestness, receiving the advice into the deep fountain of her loving heart. "Whatever the circumstances of one's life may be, I think one ought to be happy if

one can make others happy. I always did think so, and I think so still."

"And that is not so difficult as some suppose. People talk as if it was, and make a great burden of it—but there is no need. I am going to make two deaf men happy to-day. It will be easily done. I have got them to dinner all to myself. I shall devote myself to them. There will be no brilliant person to put them out of conceit, but I shall listen to their long stories, and make my interested answers clear and loud; and they will be delighted with me, and I shall be glad to give them pleasure. Some people would sigh and groan over it; but I don't. I shall be glad, perhaps, when it is over, but still I shall be contented with the day."

Mary went home with a sigh in her heart. It was partly caused by Mrs. Clifton's words.

She who would so willingly give happiness to all, seemed on the contrary doomed to cause misery. She averted her eyes as best she could from the sorrow she had seen that day; but there was another misery which was before her, on which it was her duty to reflect, and to which it seemed her fate unceasingly to add. It occupied her this day until Mr. Merivale's return; and the image of Alan was banished from her mind, as her trembling fancy repeated again and again her confession of what had occurred, and pictured its effects upon her husband's face.

When dinner was over, she took up her work, and he took up the newspaper, which made, if not his study, at least the refuge for his eyes during the evenings they passed together. Then she said, "I ought to tell you that I met Captain Sinclair at Mrs. Clifton's to-day."

Her words were as a touch on a raw wound, but he showed no sign of the pain they caused. His eyes remained fixed on the paper, and he merely said, "Did you, Mary?"

But she would not be repelled by the cold manner. She strove once more to win from him sympathy. She went on with trembling earnestness, almost with tenderness, so pitifully she felt towards him, "I would not have done it willingly, but now it is over I am glad. It has been a comfort to us both. *Now* I shall be able to put all the past away, and I hope to make you happier for the future. If you will let me, I will."

Not a word came in reply to her words. The earnestness with which she spoke was death to him. It told too forcibly of all she had suffered, and suffered still from her love for another, to reach a heart hardened with jealousy. He perused the paper in silence, and made no sign.

She rose up, following her instincts of duty, gently laid her hand upon his shoulder, and asked, "Are you displeased with me? You must not be so."

"Surely not, Mary. I have no cause," he coldly said.

She could do no more. She sat down, chilled to her heart's core.

Then he raised his eyes from the paper, laid it down, and looked at her. She was very pale, and the expression of her face was changed to despair. There was no trace of the soft pity towards him, which but a few minutes before had been there. He saw it, received its meaning full into his heart, and left the room to feed upon the bitter reflections it forced upon him.

He went to be alone, and he left Mary alone, *alone!* There was her temptation; it was in her sense of loneliness that she was weak. She lay back on the sofa

where she sat, and while she languidly reposed her weary head, the thoughts and images which that day's meeting had vividly renewed within her, came sweeping over her fancy. The joy that might have been hers — that *was* hers — the love and sympathy that were awaiting her—the heart that beat only for her. These were happy thoughts. She strove but feebly against them, and they mastered her.

Yet it was but the poor infirm flesh that was weak. Her spirit was willing still; and she was not abandoned. From the trance into which she had fallen, sad and sweet, but sinful, she was roused and startled by her brother's entrance.

"Hallo, Mary," he said, approaching her, "alone! Well, that is a good job, and better luck than I expected."

In a second she was conscious of where her thoughts had flown, of what dream

had wrapped her in Elysium, and while her cheek glowed with shame and dread, she seized his hand with a convulsive grasp, and welcomed him with a warmth that surprised and flattered him.

"Where's poor old soul, Mary?" he asked, looking about him; "I am very much obliged to him for taking himself off, I must say; but what is he gone to mope about?"

"Don't call him so, Frank," Mary said, with tears in her eyes—tears of penitence and regret—"You know it always gave me pain, and I cannot bear it now."

"Well, I won't, if it annoys you," he said, with kind condescension, "that is, if I can help it. It is certain he is neither poor nor old; and yet, somehow, the name seems to fit upon him. But, no matter now. I have come to ask your assistance on a small matter of my

own, and I am very glad to find all handy here."

"What is the matter, Frank—debts?" and forgetful for the moment of her brother's best interests, Mary spoke with eagerness, such rapture it would have been to help him.

"Debts, Mary! no, indeed," he said, with an air of much dignity, "When I gave my promise to Mr. Merivale to do better than I had done, I meant what I said, and I am not a person to forget my word. I am pretty nearly perfect now—that is, I soon shall be, if I go on as I have begun."

"Then, what is it, dear Frank? Can I do anything for you?"

"Do you remember Miss Davis, Mary?"

"Oh! yes; of course I do. Your —— But she's——"

"She's a widow now," he said gravely.

"Is she! so soon! I am so sorry, Frank."

"So am I; that is, I am as sorry as a person in my situation can be. But Mr. Larpent has been dead these three months, so we need not think so much about that. Three months is a long time. People get over things in three months.

"Oh, Frank, hardly, surely."

"I mean *I* do. Of course, I was shocked, and all that sort of thing, when I heard Mr. Larpent was dead; but one can't be shocked for ever. You see, Mary," he continued, twirling a paper-cutter round his fingers, "I have always thought I was the person she liked best, and others have told me the same, and people of good judgment too; ladies, and people who understand things."

"Then, why did she marry?" Mary asked, doubtfully.

"Oh! my dear Mary, don't be so very green and innocent. It don't do in a married woman. Why, of course, people must live in this world; and my prospects, whatever they may be now, were not very splendid then."

"Oh, yes; I see—riches!" Mary said, and sighed.

"Yes, of course; and I am sure I thought it the most suitable thing possible. Mr. Larpent was very well off, and a very gentlemanlike man too, only a little old. I am sure I was not surprised at her marrying him. Well, but now, Mary, you see she is left pretty well off, so it would be quite another thing, and if she did fancy me——"

"Dear Frank, it is too soon yet to think such thoughts."

"I am not thinking anything improper," he said, impatiently. "I hope I know what's

what better than that. I am not even thinking of going near her just yet. But I want *you* to go. She came to London yesterday."

"I, Frank! But I don't know her. It would be such a strange thing to do."

"Not at all, trust me for that. They know you as well, from being my sister, as they know me, and I can tell you I have not said bad things of you. They will take your calling as the greatest favour."

"Who are *they*?"

"Her mother and sisters. She is staying with them. They live in the Regent's Park. There is an old mother, rather vulgar, and three girls, fine girls, but not equal to *her*. Well, Mary?"

"I will think about it, Frank. Come again in a day or two, and you shall hear what I settle. I will, if I think it right."

"Thank you, Mary. I know you will, be-

cause you are as good-natured a girl as ever lived. It will be a fine thing to have me married, won't it; not that I am thinking of that just yet, of course. It would be highly improper."

"I advise you not; time makes many changes, and even if once she thought of you, she may have,—I hope she has,—forgotten it now."

"Perhaps. You need not say anything about it to poor old . . . to Mr. Merivale, Mary. It is quite a private matter of my own. And now I've put it in your hands, I shall not think about it any more. Here he comes; and goodness me, how black he looks! I shall stay and cheer him. I'll do it, depend upon it."

Mr. Merivale looked surprised on seeing Frank,—but his presence relieved him. To sit with Mary that evening, and feel that her thoughts were with another, was too great

agony. The presence of a third dispelled thought, and he received him with a welcome.

Frank sat down and made himself agreeable. "Have you seen the new play, Mr. Merivale?"

"No."

"Don't you ever go to the play?"

"No."

"Don't you mean to? It's a pity not."

No answer.

"I wish you would take Mary, or let me take her. It's a horrid bad thing for people to shut themselves up. They want amusement in this world, that I am certain of."

Mr. Merivale turned his head and looked full in Mary's sad face. It was a thing he rarely did now. It was so changed from what he remembered it, that he had little pleasure in gazing. Its pensiveness at this moment irritated him, and his tone was harsh, as he asked, "Do you want amusement, Mary?"

"If you would take me to the play I should like to go," she replied, more from dutiful impulse, than from any wish.

"Plays are not for me," he replied, gloomily. "Your brother can take you if it is needful."

"It is *not* needful," she replied, forcing a smile, "I will wait till you can take me."

That smile had no deception in it. It was the saddest expression Mr. Merivale had ever seen, and he turned away his eyes in despair.

Frank began again. "The new play is a capital play. I am sure you would like it; very pathetic and all that, but I laughed till I almost broke in two. It's a kind of a dream. It's a very good thing. I wish you could see it!"

A few words of encouragement from Mary drew from him the whole story. It was a thrilling, exciting story, and he, growing

excited, acted it all through with force and fire. Both his auditors were startled out of their troubles to listen, and when it was over both with a sigh relapsed into their sad selves.

But Frank's coming that evening had been, so far as Mary was concerned, a providential thing; not providential as men lightly say it, but in very truth he was a messenger of comfort for her sadness, and of help for her weakness. "It is not the burden (says the Spanish proverb), but the overburden that kills the beast." That day her burden had become by some degrees too heavy for her, and thus the weight of the hour was lightened, and the time of over-strong temptation whiled away.

She went to bed with a strange variety of thoughts in her head. Plans for Frank and Miss Davis, and the

strange tale Frank had told, blending with the too vivid pictures of her fancy. So was she saved from new temptation. So lulled to sleep, and by sleep enabled to rise refreshed and armed for new battles in the morning.

CHAPTER X.

"But intermingled with the generous seed,
Grew many a poisonous weed;
Thus fares it still with all that takes its birth
From human care, or grows upon the breast of earth."
WORDSWORTH.

ALAN SINCLAIR'S character had its dangers and weaknesses. His reputation was singularly high among the youth of his own age and standing; so high that he was considered as above common temptations; and being so considered, temptations did in fact rarely assail him.

He was liked; for there was nothing scornful or pharisaic in his ways; but he was let alone; instinctive homage was paid to his love of virtue and hate of vice. Thus, therefore, he had passed his life in tolerable safety; not doing any great or virtuous actions, but steering clear of the approaches to evil, and dreaming of a standard of excellence higher than he attained.

He could not but be conscious, seeing, as he did on all sides, lives and habits of a different nature to his own, that his practice was higher than that of most of his companions; he might be pardoned, therefore, for considering himself safe. Thus far, comparatively little tempted, he did not calculate on being tempted; accustomed to go over the theory of virtue in his thoughts, he had no consciousness of how hard it is when

temptations actually come, to be even commonly virtuous; much more how hard it is to attain any high degree of obedience and submission to the divine commands. But a temptation came that touched his heart and being, and behold he was frail as other men.

It is true, therefore, that a great danger attends the dreaming of virtue without corresponding action; but because there is danger let no one suppose it is of no avail. The mind that has learned to delight itself in good, may indeed fall, may possibly fall more fearfully than other men, but it is a hard thing for a mind that delights in good not to rise again, not to return with longing to the proper home of its affections.

Mary's character was in this respect altogether different to Alan's. Her thoughts were less high, far less holy than his;

but no good thought had ever been with her a barren thought. There was ever a dutiful following of the prompting of her conscience, a dutiful listening to the soft whispers of her divine guide. Everything was tested and strengthened by action, and in temptation therefore she was comparatively strong. And happy was it for Alan that his affections were anchored on one so steadfast and so true. Had it been otherwise, who could tell into what abyss he might have fallen; have fallen himself and plunged her; snatching her from home and duty to follow him? The first step on his part had been made; overwhelming temptation might have ensued.

For, as all the unhappy do, he looked on his own as a peculiar case. He thought in all the annals of mortal troubles, in all the chances of mortal

life, a trial so perverse, so strange, so insupportable had never yet been allotted to man. He said Mary was his own, and nothing could make her not so. Thus he argued, and had he found her blind and weak as himself he might have warped her judgment and misguided her sad heart.

But his love of what was good, natural, and cultivated had helped him. He had chosen for himself, he had fixed his affections on, a good heart; and through her he was saved and strengthened.

When the meeting was over, when the excitement it had caused had died away, he thought of the advice she had given him. It was evident that it was the best he could follow, yet he could not decide on leaving the place in which she lived; in which he had met, and should chance favour him, might meet her again.

He was not altogether untrue in saying her misery made his. No doubt had he found her happy the first agony would have been more acute; but the very acuteness of the agony would have separated his thoughts from her and her concerns. Now he knew that both were miserable; day and night he repeated this; day and night he maddened himself over the past, and cast unhallowed glances into what might chance to arise in the future; and, meanwhile, felt comfort in the thought that his presence might protect; the sight of him cheer her.

Thus for another week or two he wandered dreary and disconsolate about the streets of London; afraid to venture close to her home, but trusting to chance to give him another sight of her face.

But the chance to which he trusted

did not come; and at the end of a fortnight he determined to make it for himself come what might. He had a legal friend and adviser in Lincoln's Inn, and making a visit to him an excuse, he twice passed Mary's house, and the second time saw her carriage drive to the door.

He walked on with a beating, uncertain heart and step; then boldly returned and stood near. She came out and saw him; but far different was the glance she cast upon him to that for which he had waited; to that which his passionate feelings had conjured up. It was a slow, grave, sad, reproachful look, whose rebuke sank into the depths of his soul. His advancing step was arrested, a blush of shame burned on his cheek, and faltering and unconsciously moving his hat, he disappeared. He had come, as he told himself, to comfort her.

Much comfort he had given to her poor perplexed heart.

Without allowing or confessing that he had been wrong, he made reparation to his conscience, by an immediate decision to follow her advice; and the next day called on Mrs. Clifton, to tell her he was off, begging her to let Mary know the fact, and to tell her it was because *she* had advised him to do it.

"My dear Major Sinclair," Mrs. Clifton replied, "I will willingly give the first part of your message. Whether there is much wisdom in the second I am doubtful. The sooner you and Mary put each other out of your heads the better, and while you talk in that way it will never be done. Do it because it is your duty, if it is so, but don't do it because Mary wishes it."

"Would you have me put out of my thoughts the only thought that can keep me

from evil? If Mary was not what she is, I cannot tell what I might be. Such things have happened," he continued, passionately, "as have shaken my faith. I thought if men did their duty, they would meet with a reward; or at least that they would not be bitterly punished. I tried to do my duty, and Mary did the same, and this is our reward."

"I am not theologian enough to enter upon a question of merits," Mrs. Clifton said, "though I have my doubts whether the very best of us have any claim to rewards; but be that as it may, there is now a plain matter-of-fact before you, and plain common-sense ought to be a sufficient guide. Mary is another man's wife. It is your duty, a duty so clear that a child must see it, to put her out of your thoughts if you can; and if at the present moment this is impossible, at any rate to try to do it; not

to cherish wrong feelings, and persuade yourself they are right ones. Do be a man, and look your position in the face. I have patience with people who are regularly bad, but I have no patience with people who mystify plain things and call evil good, and good evil. I allowed you to see Mary, because I thought a meeting would help you both to get over your misery. Pray let me see that I was right, and not wrong."

A heightened colour showed that Alan's conscience felt her plain words; and though he did not allow their full force, because he thought his own and Mary's case an exception to common rules, he thanked her for her advice, and said with a faint smile, that "he liked to be blown up."

"There!" she cried, "that is all right. Do smile and be yourself, and don't sit looking like a sullen tiger. Now, tell me, when do you go?"

"To-morrow morning."

"And when shall you arrive at Loch-Art?"

"I suppose the evening of the day after. It is a long way from London, even with the railway's help;" and he sighed.

"The farther the better. I hope you will have occupation there. *Amusement*, if all I hear is true, is not, I fear, likely."

"What do you hear?" he asked, listlessly. "I know very little."

"I have heard it said that Lord Sinclair has hardly been in his right mind since he lost his sons; but it may not be true."

"I dare say it is. Jane's letter (my cousin Jane Sinclair), in answer to my offer to go to them, was a very sad one. It almost implied, I think, something of the kind."

"Will Miss Sinclair be glad to have you?"

"Yes, very glad. I wrote to her on my first arrival in England. I was then happy, and could think of her troubles, and I suppose I wrote kindly. I meant to have gone at once, but you know why I could not. I wrote again to-day to say I would come."

"You will be in your right place there, and I hope you will stay."

"That must, of course, depend on my uncle. You will understand it is not for me to put myself forward. In former days he did not like me. He was always generous and liberal, but he never encouraged me to be at Loch-Art. His dislike proceeded from some kind friends, who, because I was not *always* hunting and shooting, represented me as a milksop. On my return from Canada, four or five years ago, he was pleased with some account he heard of me, and would have been glad to have

me, I believe; but I did not choose to be taken up and put down, and I did not go. I know, therefore, but little of them. I have not seen Jane Sinclair since I was a boy—what I call a boy now, but which some call a young man."

"I hope she is a nice person, for your sake."

"I hope so too. I dare say she is. She is not very young; she is three or four years older than I am, and I am almost thirty."

"So much the better. She will give you good advice."

"Yes," he said, absently.

"Come, my dear sir," she cried, laughingly, "don't relapse. Give your mind to common things, and common things will cheer you. A love-sick girl is pardonable, but a love-sick man . . ." And she held up her hands with a movement of ridicule.

"Mrs. Clifton," he said, looking full in her face with his melancholy gaze, "you do not not know of what you speak. It is not a common chance that deprives a man of a being like Mary. God grant His chastening may turn to good for her and me; but the chastening is not the less severe."

"Yes, you are right. It is no matter to jest upon. Pardon me. But you have preached to yourself. If you own the chastening is from Heaven, it becomes you as a man and a Christian to bow to it."

Alan Sinclair left London on the following morning. The railway helped him as far as Edinburgh, but his route lay afterwards in rougher ways, and though the number of miles he travelled did not warrant the time, he was from early morning to the moonlight of a July day

before he came within sight of the place of his destination.

Loch-Art lay in a valley, and when he reached a hill-top which overlooked the vale, he sent forward his chaise to announce his coming, and to give notice of his intention of walking the few miles that remained of his road. He was weary in heart and spirits, weary of his confinement to dusty vehicles, weary of himself and all the world, and a walk in the fresh moonlight was for the moment an enjoyable thing.

It seemed so, at least, while confined to his dusty chaise, but when his desire was accomplished, and he walked along in the cool air, his thoughts fell at once from the discomforts of the journey, to his own troubles; and wearily, and moodily, and indifferent to all around him, he thought of the perverseness of his fate, and unrefreshed pursued his way.

After a mile or two of wandering on a a bleak hill top, from which a distant glimpse only of the valley was to be seen, he reached a lower level, and making a sudden turn, came in sight of the magnificent vale in which his home lay. It was spread out smiling before him in the brilliant moonlight; the castle embosomed in woods; rough bold hills rising around; and the large Loch which gave its name to the region, shining like glass, and stretching out like a sea before him. No leaf moved, and not a sound disturbed the solitude and repose.

Alan paused, and for the moment admiration of the beauties of nature held him absorbed; then for the first time a consciousness came, that he who had been born for other prospects was now the heir to all this magnificence; an heir who

before long, would be called on to enter into his inheritance.

But no throb of joy made his heart bound. It lay smiling before him, but no delight in that which was to be his own, caused an answering smile within. Once there had been joy in the thought that he too should have something to bestow on Mary; but he cared for none of these things now. The dim consciousness came and passed; and again his thoughts reverted, and with even bitterer repining to that dispensation which had robbed his life of every charm.

He was still walking on moody and morose, when suddenly in the moonlight he saw a flag raised on the castle tower, and at the same moment lights gleamed from every window. He started, then paused again.

"It is for me," he said, bitterly.

"Do they think my coming is to bring gladness?" And for a moment he stayed his footsteps, and with something of indignation, was tempted to turn away and go back whence he came.

But unless when his peculiar trial had warped his bitter feelings, Alan was kindly natured, and an instant afterwards his thoughts had left their ceaseless musing on his own fate, and with a bound had cast themselves into the sorrows of those who were now awaiting him. He turned his eyes on the bright waters in which two young cousins had lost their lives, and one still slept; and as he pictured that day, and that mourning at the castle, the mourning for the firstborn son; himself, his troubles, his destiny faded out of sight, and the scenes on which he was about to enter took possession of his soul.

Alan was now almost thirty, and it was twelve or thirteen years since he had been at Loch-Art. His remark was just when he said he had been no favourite with his uncle. His natural disposition was quiet and contemplative, and the events which had made his home desolate, had set a seal of melancholy on his soul. It was as a melancholy boy of seventeen or eighteen, that he had passed a year with his uncle and cousins, and the efforts made to dissipate his sorrows, too roughly made, and therefore unavailing, had in their failure excited displeasure against him, and even something bordering on contempt.

Lord Sinclair had been at that time a jovial, hearty laird; entirely wrapt in sports and pastimes, and out-door occupations; happy and prosperous enough to be without much sensation himself, and therefore

intolerant of any excess of feeling in others. He had had one great trial in his life, the loss of his wife, which he had certainly felt; but he had borne it so well, and had so successfully combated with his regrets, that he had little patience with those whose feelings were acuter, or less under mastery than his own.

When his nephew, a pale, overgrown, melancholy boy, arrived, wanting a mother's care for his body, and any and everybody's care for his saddened mind, Lord Sinclair's kind heart, for he had a very kind one, was touched; and he himself and by his orders, his children, devoted themselves to comfort the desolate orphan. To every amusement in which they shared he was invited; boating, shooting, deer-stalking, fishing, all were offered to him, and had he chosen, no hour of the day

need have been lonely or unamused. But Alan's body was unable to cope with his hardy cousins, and there is no acuter pain than that felt by a weak youth in the presence of strong companions. He would not plead his weakness, but he retired more and more from his cousins' rough life, and mused with melancholy musings on his own unhappy fate. The kind efforts of uncle and cousins being thus repulsed, contempt, a kindly one, but still contempt, was Alan's portion. Lord Sinclair, especially, had no patience with the diseases of the mind, and though he provided with uncommon liberality for his nephew's professional wants, he ceased to interest himself in his character.

And now this Lord Sinclair, who had despised the melancholy of a young heart, was himself a prey to melancholy in

a far more aggravated form. In the vigour of life he had surmounted a heavy sorrow, and had looked proudly on his self-mastery. But another sorrow had visited him in life's decline, and heart and mind and body had all bowed before it. The time was passed when *he* could learn charity from his own experience; but these are the lessons of life which those who see should take to their hearts and cherish.

As Alan neared the Castle, the old days came vividly before his mind's eye. His two cousins' handsome, healthy, hardy frames flitted before him; their ringing voices, their boisterous mirth, seemed still to be floating on the air; he could see their return of an evening, he could hear his uncle's hallo, "What sport?" he could fancy a girl as boyish as the boys, rushing out to welcome their return; and in

the midst of the remembrances of old days he found himself at the entrance, his repining self banished from his mind, his whole self absorbed in recollections of the past and pity for the present.

CHAPTER XI.

"Silence and stealth of dayes! 'tis now
Since thou art gone,
Twelve hundred houres, and not a brow
But clouds hang on."

H. VAUGHAN.

ALAN rang at the bell, and the heavy door was instantly opened, and a swarm of servants seemed to stand ready to receive him within.

He entered the hall, a large one, fantastically decorated with deer horns of all sizes and descriptions, and looked around

him bewildered. From the swarm of servants he then singled out one. Thirteen years before he had been the footman and had waited on Alan. He was now the steward of the house, a grave, respectable man. But Alan remembered him, and approaching him, said "Is that you, Donald?" and held out his hand. And the recollection, and the cordial greeting, won to Alan at once the hearts of all the household.

"Does my uncle expect me?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. He was told of your coming, and he ordered the flag to be put up, and he ordered us all to await you here."

Alan looked around, and courteously bowed his head, to the mournful yet eager faces which were bent upon him. He then turned again to Donald.

"You must tell me what to do. Shall I go to him at once, or shall I send to Miss Sinclair?"

"My Lord and Miss Sinclair are in the Great Saloon, and expect you, sir."

"Then let us go on;" and he moved impatiently forward.

Donald preceded him, and led him down a gallery, gloomy and dimly-lighted, to a door at the end. Absorbed in the thoughts of the approaching meeting, Alan did not observe the cause of the gloom, but when the door of what Donald had called "the Great Saloon" was thrown open, he started, and stood for a moment transfixed. The impression of the first *coup d'œil* was as if he stood suddenly at some Royal lying in state. The walls of the saloon were hung with black, the furniture was covered with black, while here and there dim lights were hung, or

lights that looked dim from the dense blackness round, and gave the idea of flickering torches.

This was the madness of the poor old Lord. His eyes could rest in peace only on that colour that seemed to mourn with him.

At the end of the room, on each side of a table on which stood a bright lamp, sat Lord Sinclair and his daughter, and as the light revealed their faces and figures, the difference in their present appearance to the forms in Alan's memory, was as great as if they had undergone the transformations of a Harlequin Farce.

His uncle, when they parted, had been a strong, athletic man of fifty-six, who preserved in mind and body, and almost in countenance, the freshness of boyhood. He was now a pale, white-haired old man, whose shrunken limbs preserved not even a recollection of

the stalwart form of other days. The afflicted mind had stricken the body, and in one year had driven life from every muscle and every limb. This change was, however, less astonishing to Alan than the change in his cousin Jane. Of her his recollection had been very vivid. The impressions left on his memory were mingled. Her unfailing kindness to himself, a kindness shown in constant support against her hardy brothers, and in an equally constant relinquishment, for his sake, of the sports in which she was no mean proficient, had excited very kindly feelings in his affectionate heart. At the same time, often in later days, he had recalled the picture of her boisterous girlhood with something not far removed from a shudder.

Crimson cheeks, a complexion not burnt, but tanned, with exposure to sun

and wind; hands and feet, the colour of the one, and the clumsy chaussure of the other, fit only for a ploughman's wife; a round, good-humoured face, on which no expression of thought ever cast a shade, and surmounted by a profusion of sandy hair, whose untidiness excited the animadversions even of her unfastidious brothers . . . this was the picture of Jane Sinclair at twenty, an age at which a young lady's boyish tastes and propensities are in general considerably modified.

The lady who came quietly forward to greet Alan, was of another species. Her features were soft and pensive; her skin pale, her figure fragile and delicate, and in her dress and the arrangement of her braided hair there was a neatness and propriety as studied as if the Fairy Order herself had presided over her toilette.

She grasped his hand and said, "You are come, Alan! Thank God, you are come!" and as she spoke she raised her eyes to his face.

It was the flash of those eyes which first brought recognition to Alan's mind. They carried him back to old days. The one peculiarity and beauty she had possessed were her black eyes contrasted with her fair Scottish complexion. On some occasions, such as when picturesquely equipped for a sporting excursion, her sunburnt cheeks and sparkling black eyes had given a gipsy-like charm to her appearance. Their effect, contrasted with her pensive paleness, was much more singular now; but there was still a likeness, and the cold stranger-like feeling which had been taking possession of Alan's mind, melted beneath their gaze.

And with the sense of reality came other sensations; he felt why he was there, and

why thus warmly welcomed; and with quivering lips and eyes softened with tears, he silently returned the grasp of her hand.

Again those strangely expressive eyes were raised gratefully to his, and then she turned to her father.

"Alan is come, father," she said, bending down. "*Alan* is here."

"He is welcome, welcome, welcome," the old man said, and he stretched out his hand, and made an effort to rise.

Alan took the hand stretched out, and as he gently forced him backwards, stooped and pressed his lips on his forehead. When he had arrived a fatherless and motherless boy at Loch-Art, Lord Sinclair had greeted him thus; the kind greeting was a thing even to this day living in Alan's memory; and now, though unconsciously, it was returned to the sonless old man.

"Dear Alan, God bless you," said the voice of his cousin, fervently.

But there was a sudden end to a scene whose agitation, even if soothing, was trying.

Lord Sinclair caught hold of Alan's arm, looked at it with a gaze of mingled anger and horror, and cried, "What is this? Don't you know that they are dead, dead, dead?"

Conscience-stricken, Alan looked down upon his suit of brown. The days of mourning for his cousin had long been over, and, wrapt in his own miseries, he had had no thought of an attention which, under his circumstances, would have been a natural one.

A glow of shame dyed his cheeks. Miss Sinclair hastened to relieve him.

"Alan has travelled, and is in haste, dear father, to-day," she said, soothingly; "to-

morrow he will be in mourning, as you wish."

"She undertakes to promise a good deal," was the irresistible reflection in Alan's mind, as his dismayed fancy turned over the wardrobe he had brought. He took, however, the hint, and said, "Forgive me, my dear uncle; I shall always in future be as you wish."

But Lord Sinclair had been agitated, and his agitation and excitement were not thus easily allayed. He raised himself again in his chair, and cried, "Did you think to find them here? My sons are *dead.* Both are dead, and one is buried. *You* are come to take their place. They are dead, dead, Alan! You thought you would see them in life as you used to do; but they come into this life no more. No more into this life. But there is a life of the world to come, is there not, Jane?"

"Yes, dear father," she said, softly.

"We shall not need to mourn for them there; because *there* they will live again. But here we mourn because they are *dead*. We all mourn; Jane and I, and even the walls of their home mourn;" and with a thin extended finger, he pointed out every object he named, till with an angry flash of his eye, he suddenly fixed it on Alan, adding, "all but you, all but you!" and so sat, pointing at him with the stare of a madman.

Alan shuddered and withdrew into the shade, and as he did so, the finger fell, and the mournful expression returned to the old man's pale face and sharp features.

"I had better go, Jane," Alan said, hurriedly. "Forgive me for having thoughtlessly given pain, when I wished only to do good," and he moved towards the door.

"Don't distress yourself," she said, following him. "It is only a paroxysm, and how could you know? I cannot leave him to-night, but Donald will attend to you; and take care of yourself, dear Alan, for you look tired and very sad."

He shook hands with her, and gloomily retreated. It had not been a cheering reception, and it required perhaps that Christian charity which was not at this time the guest of Alan's mind, to gild his new existence with any colour of an alluring nature.

CHAPTER XII.

"The man that hails you Tom or Jack,
And proves by thumps upon your back,
How he esteems your merit,
Is such a friend that one had need,
Be very much his friend indeed,
To pardon or to bear it."

COWPER.

ALAN went down to breakfast in better spirits the following morning. The black hangings lost their effect in the sunny summer light, and the lovely scenery, seen from every window that he passed, insensibly cheered him. Dreary still was the castle

and dreary was his heart, but the dreariness seemed an anomaly in the bright and beautiful world, in it, not of it. He owned that happiness was an ingredient in creation, and not, as he of late had thought, banished from it; and he felt better able to take his part in the events of life.

When he opened the door of the breakfast room, he found it occupied by two persons. In the window, with her back towards him, stood a female; female is the word to use, for neither woman nor lady expresses exactly what she appeared. Her figure was tall and ungainly, but promised youth, for long brown ringlets fell on each side of her head.

On the hearthrug, before an empty grate, stood a short, round, little man, with a bald head, bright brown eyes, and an inquisitive, intelligent face. As Alan entered and paused he bowed, and said, "Welcome, Major Sinclair," then raising his voice, added,

"Mademoiselle Melanie, welcome Major Sinclair."

At this address the female obediently turned round and curtseyed. The promise of youth was not fulfilled in her face. It was the bony colourless face of a Frenchwoman between forty and fifty. Yet though ugly and ungainly, and though there was affectation about her, her countenance was not unpleasing; and her large good-tempered mouth would have brightened homelier features.

Alan bowed courteously, but having no conception as to who his companions were, and being also backward to assume on his present position, remained silent.

Not so the small gentleman. "I believe, Major Sinclair, it must rest with me to make an introduction between us. I am Mr or Dr. Oliver, as you please, Phy-

sician in Ordinary to His Majesty Lord Sinclair, and this," waving his hand, "is Mademoiselle Melanie Dubois, Lady in Waiting to Miss Sinclair; and both your very humble servants." He bowed again, and Mademoiselle Melanie gracefully curtseyed, and Alan bowed, and then closing the door and advancing, inquired of the lady in waiting how Miss Sinclair was.

"She is well. Elle se porte bien," she replied, but. . . . ."

But Dr. Oliver took the words from her mouth.

"Lord Sinclair has had a bad night, and Miss Sinclair is unable to leave him at present. She begged that we would immediately take our breakfast, and we should have done so a quarter of an hour ago had Major Sinclair appeared. But better late than never, and we

will, if he permit, proceed to business at once."

"I am sorry," Alan said, "I had a long journey yesterday, and was tired."

"And still are so, I should imagine," said Dr. Oliver, fixing on him a look which seemed to say, "I am making myself master of all the hidden diseases of your constitution."—"No apology, Major Sinclair, I beg. Mademoiselle Melanie, will you be good enough to preside, and make us as comfortable as is possible, in the absence of our proper hostess?"

He was silent for a short time while he made preparations for a breakfast on a large scale, but interposed again on hearing Mademoiselle Melanie say, "Will Sir Majore drink coffee or tea?"

"Not Sir Major, Mademoiselle Melanie.

You may say Sir or Major, since both are titles, but it is ludicrous to combine the two."

"I do remember," said Mademoiselle Melanie, with submission. Nevertheless, a short time afterwards she asked again,

"Will Sir Majore drink some more tea?"

"Now, Mademoiselle Melanie, what did I say?" cried Dr. Oliver, dictatorially. "The phrase you make use of is nonsense. You will next be addressing Lord Sinclair as Sir My Lord. Can you not understand the proper use of titles of respect?"

Mademoiselle Melanie blushed and looked pained, and Alan, roused from abstraction, turned to her kindly, and said, "I choose that Mademoiselle Melanie should call me what she pleases," and Mademoiselle blushed again, and shook back her curls

with the air of a beauty, and for a moment seemed about to withdraw her allegiance from Dr. Oliver, and persist in her own way. But a very expressive "Humph! we may call a dog a man if we please," accompanied by some glance of reproach or contempt, apparently conquered her; for she observed, "Majore Sinclair is kind, but I do remember for the future," and was rewarded by a bow of dignified approbation.

"I was extremely sorry, Major Sinclair," he began again, "to be absent last night; more especially when I heard from Miss Sinclair that you were obliged to take your refreshment alone; but my professional duties must be attended to; a child of McKenzie's, the steward, occupied me till a late hour,—a serious case; nothing but patience and skill could have saved her."

"You were better employed than in attending to me," Alan said, civilly. "I was very comfortable."

"You see, Major Sinclair, that being as I am at present, domesticated at the Castle, I shall consider it my duty to bestow upon you the same care and attention I should have bestowed upon those who more naturally would have stood in your place. You are, as you are no doubt aware, Lord Sinclair's heir presumptive (under the circumstances I might almost say you are the heir apparent), and I shall do all that in me lies, by example and precept, to procure you the consideration that is now your due."

Alan frowned at his freedom, and was about to answer haughtily, when he continued—

"I say *at present*, for you must know,

Major Sinclair, that the Castle is not my home. I have a home of my own, a charming spot, a mile distant, which I shall some day do myself the pleasure of showing you."

"A charming spot,—*une demeure charmante*," said Mademoiselle Melanie, with a sigh of delight.

"You are very good, Mademoiselle Melanie, but I believe your opinion is likely to be confirmed by every person who sees it."

"Will not Miss Sinclair come to breakfast?" Alan asked, suddenly, wearied out with his companions.

"She will be here by-and-by."

Here Dr. Oliver took a pinch of snuff, and then proceeded—

"Lord Sinclair has unfortunately had a bad night, and a bad night, Major Sinclair, when the nerves are irritable,

makes a bad morning. One follows the other as a natural consequence. As soon as Miss Sinclair can get him to sleep, she will come to us."

"My uncle is much more ill than I expected," Alan observed, with more of interest in his manner, and looking anxious to obtain an opinion.

"I don't know what you expected, Major Sinclair. Absent relations seldom do realize the state of things. Lord Sinclair is, between ourselves, almost as ill as he can be."

"You don't say so!" Alan exclaimed, with anxiety and alarm, and intense compassion for his cousin expressed in his face.

"Oh! as to that," said Dr. Oliver, in a cheery, off-hand manner, "no doubt it will be all right in the spring."

As it was now July, this allusion to

the spring perplexed Alan; it allayed, however, the alarm the previous speech had caused, and he sunk back into the abstraction from which he had been momentarily roused.

He found afterwards that this phrase "it will be all right in the spring," was one constantly on Dr. Oliver's lips; applied by him in the form of consolation, whenever too much of anxiety or sorrow was expressed in his presence. It had indeed become so habitual to him that he applied it to cases where it was totally inapplicable.

When Jane Sinclair was weeping for her brothers with an agony that could not be comforted, he took upon himself the office of consoler, and this phrase, in the course of his consolation, fell unconsciously from his lips. Jane paused in her weeping, and looked up at him with a gaze

of reproach. But Dr. Oliver was a man who never was in the wrong, and, stung by the look of reproach, he said with quickness, "Do you mean to tell me that it will not be all right in the everlasting spring?" and though at the moment the words passed unheeded, they afterwards haunted her; in the silence and sadness of the lonely castle conjuring up at times before her a vision of vague bright beauty, which, more than many soberer reflections, comforted her.

Breakfast came to an end without the appearance of Jane Sinclair. Dr. Oliver rose at last, and said, "Every man has his appointed work, Major Sinclair, and the wise man does it. I beg you to excuse me; for time and tide wait for no man, and my work must be done."

"Pray, do not apologize," Alan said

quickly, only too happy to get rid of him.

"But, my dear sir, I *must* apologize, for if the issues of life and death did not hang, as I may, and not profanely, say, in my fingers, I should consider it my present work to wait upon you. As it is, I must be gone. Perhaps you will be so good as to remain here till Miss Sinclair appears. She has not breakfasted, and sooner or later she will come."

Alan inclined his head in acquiescence.

Dr. Oliver stepped to the door, then turned round and gave further directions. "Madamoiselle Melanie, you need not remain. Major Sinclair will this morning receive his cousin, and considering the relationship between them, and the present circumstances of the

family, I believe it is perfectly according to etiquette that he should receive her alone."

Alan coloured again with indignation. In former days a temper naturally sweet, and a charity unpractised yet overflowing, had made him, while smiling at the faults and peculiarities of men, bear and forbear with them; but the jar in his affections had acted on his moral nature, and his feelings against Dr. Oliver had something in them almost of ferocity. An angry command that he would mind his own business was on his lips, but Dr. Oliver, quick in all his movements, had withdrawn before it could be spoken. Mademoiselle Melanie, obedient to the order laid upon her, shook her curls, curtseyed and followed him, and Alan remained alone.

He walked to the window; leant on the

window sill, and abandoned himself to his reflections. The lovely colouring, the magnificent scenery, the brilliancy of the lights, and the depths of shade, astonished and delighted him. He had an eye and a heart for beauty, and the unexpected beauty of the landscape entranced and softened him. Then came again the thought "to be his own," and with it a momentary swell of pride; but it was momentary only. The thought of Mary followed. Mary lost to him. The swell of admiration and pleasure faded into repining; and with a brooding melancholy he remained gazing upon the scene.

A light touch on his arm, a voice, "Why, Alan! how deep in thought you are!" roused him. He looked round, and with a slight smile his cousin told him that she had breakfasted, unheeded by him.

Observing that he coloured at the remark, she added, "I was but two minutes, and was glad to finish before I disturbed you; and, indeed, dear Alan," she added, again glancing at the glittering lake, "I guess what your thoughts were, and thank you for them."

Conscience-stricken in the remembrance how different his reflections had been, he said with earnest kindness, "How painful it must be, Jane! How can you bear the sight?"

"Once I could not; once I hated it," she replied, "but I do not hate it now. The sea will give up its dead as well as the earth, and I can look on both graves with a hopeful heart. Yes, Alan, with hope. My brothers were not like you; but they had, do not doubt it, their holy thoughts, their victories over temptation, their prayers heard in heaven. I do not

doubt it, nor must you." She spoke with a light in her eyes and a singular earnestness in her voice.

"I do not doubt it," he said, gravely. "Even in the old thoughtless days they always loved good and hated evil, and nothing but good did they ever teach to me." For a moment the expression "not like you," struck upon and troubled his conscience. Not like *him*. *He* who was now coveting his neighbour's wife. But it was but a passing thought.

"How is my poor uncle?" he asked, after a pause.

"He had a bad night. He thought you were Ronald," she said, lowering her voice and speaking rapidly; "you know when last you came he thought you like him, and last night it struck him again. All night long he was crying that Ronald was come back, and ordering his

room to be prepared, and rejoicings to be made."

"And have you been up all night?"

"No. They tried to pacify him at first; but they could not, and at four they called me. I have been up since then. But he is sleeping now, and when the paroxysm is past he will revive and be calm, and be happy, Alan, to have you here."

"This is too much for you to bear," he said anxiously. "How long has this been, and how long is it to last?"

"The blow was struck on that dreadful day. Since then he has gradually declined, and so I well know he will do till the end. When that end will be, and whether it will be painful or peaceful, God only knows. It is enough to bear the day, and most days I can bear it, and be content,"

"Oh! Jane, how changed you are!"

Alan could not refrain from exclaiming, as a vision of her former sunburnt, thoughtless, mirthful self flitted before his mind's eye. In the light of the morning her paleness was almost dazzling, and though her eyes flashed, and there was a singular force in her manner of speech, the quietness of her face was strange. He could scarcely believe in the fact of her identity.

"I am changed, I know," she replied, and for the first time a faint colour flickered on her cheek. "Life itself as it passes changes us. In those old days you are thinking of, it would have killed me to picture my present self; but now I know that there is strength for every day, and that all things that have hope in them are endurable."

Alan sighed, without answering her. He had turned her words into a reflec-

tion on his own hopeless fate, and into a justification of his own repining.

"I did not mean to speak of these things," Jane said, quickly and kindly. "Will you come out, Alan, while my father sleeps, and see all the changes years have made? You must learn to like our poor old home."

And again, conscience-stricken at his selfishness, he stirred up his interest to accompany her, and they wandered for an hour in the lovely scenes unseen since his boyhood.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Oh! shame upon thee, listless heart,
So sad a sigh to heave."

KEBLE.

"WHERE is our Major?" said Dr. Oliver, as he seated himself at luncheon some hours afterwards.

"Notre Majore!" repeated Mademoiselle Melanie, the chief of whose conversation consisted in an occasional translation into French of some word selected from the

observations of others, especially from those of Dr. Oliver.

"I have sent for my cousin," said Jane. "Donald said he was writing letters."

"Well, Miss Sinclair, and what do you think of your guest?"

"He is very little changed—wonderfully little changed," she replied.

"You must change him then, I can tell you. Your ladyship must stir him up," shaking his head authoritatively, though sportively.

"You do not think Alan looks unhealthy?" she asked, anxiously.

"Humph," he said, drawing a long breath; but as Alan appeared no more was said.

He had been writing to Mrs. Clifton —that is, whatever the words of the pen might say, in heart, writing to Mary;

and if his walk with Jane had done him good, chasing his gloom away, this latter occupation had restored it tenfold.

Dr. Oliver looked him through and through, as he sat down; but made no immediate remark.

"No, thank you," Alan replied, with a smile, in answer to Jane's proffers of helping him to what was before her, "I came for the pleasure of obedience, not for the pleasure of the appetite."

"You will eat something," she said, anxiously.

"No, thank you. You must remember I have had a Scotch breakfast, and a Scotch breakfast is not a thing to be quickly forgotten."

"And you will please to remember, Major Sinclair," said Dr. Oliver, drily, "that we have all had Scotch breakfasts; and yet that we do feel ourselves capable

of enduring a Scotch luncheon. I, at least, having done my proper share of man's work, find myself, thank Heaven, perfectly capable of digesting my proper share of food."

"Dieu merci," said Mademoiselle Melanie.

"But I have done no work," Alan explained, "and at the best of times I am not a great eater."

"Then you will never be a great man. Depend upon that. The mind requires food quite as much as the body, and no starved mind will ever do any work in its generation."

"Alan has done work enough," said Jane, glancing at his helpless arm. "He may rest for a while. When he is ready to work, we will find work for him, if he will let us." She saw a glow on his cheek, and mistook the glow of irritation for that of wounded feelings.

"The sooner the better. Rest is well enough for some, but Major Sinclair wants a different diet." He suddenly started up, and before Alan could defend himself had rushed round to his right arm, seized it, and put his fingers on his pulse. "I knew it," he cried, coolly reseating himself. "A languid pulse, that requires food and action, and not repose. Mademoiselle Melanie be so good as to place a mutton cutlet on Major Sinclair's plate. That one with a little of the good left in it. Don't be a child," he continued, as Alan withdrew his plate, "take good advice when it is given; and given gratis, too."

"I will take it thankfully when I ask for it," Alan replied, shortly; and then, although he knew he was behaving like a child, he pushed his chair away, and left the room.

Jane looked after him with an expression of great annoyance.

"Pugh, pugh," said Dr. Oliver, in answer to her look, "there's nothing to fret about. It will do him good, stir him up. Unless he is stirred up, I can tell you there will be a doctor's work there. Can't you see he has something preying on his heart, gnawing at his vitals? I saw it with a glance of my eye. Fret him, worry him, no matter what; but stirred up he must be, or we shall have him slipping through our hands one of these days."

"Le pauvre Majore!" sighed Mademoiselle Melanie, piteously.

"We'll put him to rights," said Dr. Oliver, confidently, as he helped himself to a fresh supply of the food he recommended. "He'll be all right in the spring."

When luncheon was over Jane followed Alan; anxiety for his health superseding

all other thoughts. She found him in the gloomy saloon pacing up and down.

He was in that state of inward misery when a man is thankful for any cause of outward irritation, and before Jane could speak he burst out,

"My dear Jane, these friends of yours will drive me to distraction."

Her countenance fell. "I am very sorry," she said, anxiously and gravely, "What *can* I do to help it?"

He was already sorry for what he had said. "You cannot help it, of course; I must try and learn to bear it as you do. If I can," he added, as a remembrance of Dr. Oliver again crossed his brain. "My dear Jane! is it possible that these are your companions! How you bear with them as you do I cannot imagine. You must have an angel's temper."

"Indeed, no, Alan. No flattery is due

to me. It is no endurance. They are friends; true, if strange ones. My trust in them is perfect; and to trust," and her black eyes flashed in the earnestness of her speech, "is the best of earthly blessings."

"It is of course," he said, in some surprise, "but I confess. . . . . I am not so perfect as you are, I am afraid. I am afraid I like excellence in more seemly garments; but I will say no more about it. I did not mean to annoy you."

"You cannot annoy, whatever you say or do, dear Alan. I would rather have you yourself, even if it be to criticize. It makes it feel like home once more. But let me tell you, Melanie has been with me for eleven years. There came a time when my father thought I required a woman's guardianship; I was not much of a

young lady as you know; and Melanie was found. She could not do much, but she was kind and true, and ever has been so, and I know that except one I am her first earthly thought and care. She loves me, and I trust her, and am thankful."

"I was not speaking of her," Alan explained, "She seems a harmless creature. I did not at least intend to complain of her; but, my dear Jane, Dr. Oliver is insufferable. A positive nuisance."

"And yet he too has been a friend such as one rarely finds. A friend *always* caring for us as if we were his children, but since *that* day he has given up all to be with my father. Night after night he sits up with him, and then goes about his daily work, hard work often, and yet is always patient, and never complains. I trust to his attachment as I trust to my own,

and such trust is a blessed thing," and again there was that flashing look in her eyes.

"I withdraw my criticisms," Alan said, with his kindliest smile. "Do not fear. I will bear with him as well as I can."

"Thanks, for it must be so. He must stay with us now until the end. But it was not for this I followed you. You look ill. Dr. Oliver thinks you are ill. You must not neglect yourself; you must let me take care of you."

"I am well enough in health, Jane, thank you, and shall, like Job, I doubt not, wear out my appointed time. Perhaps a longer one than I care to have."

"Dr. Oliver is clever," she continued, looking at without heeding him. "His eyes are quick, and I never knew him

mistaken. He says you have something preying on your heart."

"He is right enough there," Alan said, bitterly. "But some troubles are beyond the reach of *his* prescriptions."

"But not beyond the reach of affection; to share if not to heal them. Dear Alan, I *will* know. In former days, I would have comforted you if I could; but could not. But now I know what suffering is, and I can feel, not for you only, but with you."

And the next day, won, not by her importunity, but by her kindness, Alan did tell her all, and was startled by the fullness of the sympathy he received. Had not his eyes been fixed on himself, he might have guessed that such sympathy was the sympathy of a like experience, and not of kindness only.

Her advice was very different in its tone to that of Mrs. Clifton. Hers had been the view of plain common sense; very useful, but as yet too calm and plain for Alan's state of mind. Jane Sinclair's was plain also, but it was touched with a loftier tone. It was of absolute submission to the will of an Almighty God who orders men's lives; of absolute confidence in a Heavenly Father, who orders men's lives for their good; and spoken with that undoubting trust which, for the moment at least, awakens trust.

On one point only she refused him her sympathy. When he said, "If only Mary was not what she is; if only I could see a fault in her, I could bear it better; but to know what she is, and that I have lost her, there, Jane, is the sting; it is her perfectness that maddens me."

"Be sure you are wrong," Jane said, with her flashing eyes. "To lose her, and know her worthy, may make life dreary, but there is no bitterness. The bitterness of grief would be to have loved her, and found her unworthy of your love."

Alan could not gainsay her words, but he did not feel their truth. To lose Mary, to lose a being like Mary,—this seemed to him the sum total of human misery.

Jane was not satisfied with giving sympathy and advice. She thought for him also; and seeing, as was indeed evident, that employment was what Alan required, at once requested him to undertake the management of her father's affairs. Since his illness, she had, with the assistance of the steward, managed all things herself, and it had been a pleasure in

her melancholy life to be the one to care for the wants, and plan for the good of those about her.

All this, however, would shortly be in Alan's hands, and she determined at once to ask him to undertake it; putting the request in the form of a favour to herself, "that she might have the more leisure for the sadder cares that occupied her."

And she judged rightly in so framing her request; for in any other form, Alan, on the ground that his mind was too distracted for minute attention, would have declined to accede to it. He felt, even when accepting it in the hope of assisting her, that she had asked an impossibility; and when, two days afterwards, the steward presented himself with applications, and calculations, and schemes, requiring a whole and sane mind to listen to, and decide upon, Alan's heart sank

within him. For weeks his disordered thoughts had ranged at pleasure, and the effort to fix them on matters totally indifferent to him was a penance. But necessity and shame mastered him. The effort was made, and it needs no words to relate that, the mere effect of repeated efforts, joined to the interest which no man can fail to feel in business entrusted to his hands, was to sooth his temper, to tranquillize his thoughts, to reduce the fever that preyed upon him, and to give him—not peace and resignation, merely natural causes cannot give gifts beyond nature,—but comparative calm and sanity of mind, leaving it free for other influences to blow upon him.

And soon his state of mind passed to one beyond this. His temperament, though indolent, was ardent, and though the desire to do good had hitherto been

a mere theory of the brain, yet it was, if not as with Mary, a passion, certainly a principle in his nature; this principle was appealed to here. Hitherto little had been in his hands; suddenly he became the one to whom many looked, and he felt the responsibility. He was dragged out of himself, and though often it *was* a drag, there were many moments when the spark of real benevolence was lighted in his mind.

About three weeks after he had assumed the management of affairs, a question regarding the purchase of a piece of land arose. The steward said it would be advantageous to a property possessed by Lord Sinclair at some distance, and requested Alan to go and see it, before the purchase was decided upon. It was up in the rough highlands, and would require an excursion of two or three days; but

urged by Jane, and by no means unwilling, Alan undertook it, protesting all the while on the total incapacity of his eyes to make any such decision as that required.

On the morning after his return, as he sat at breakfast with Dr. Oliver and Mademoiselle Melanie, after satisfying the eager questionings of the former regarding all he had done, seen, said, and eaten since they parted, he observed—

"About twenty miles from here, I remarked a curious place; an ugly, modern house, tacked to an old castle, that reminded me of Guy Mannering. To whom does it belong?"

At this simple question, Dr. Oliver merely took a very long pinch of snuff, while Mademoiselle Melanie shook back her curls, and said with vehemence—

"*Pauvre* Miss Sinclair, *pauvre chose!*"

Somewhat surprised, Alan looked at Dr. Oliver for an explanation.

"Oh! Major Sinclair," he said, with another pinch, "thereby hangs a tale."

"I beg your pardon, I had no intention of asking an indiscreet question, nor will I repeat it."

"Indiscretion, Major Sinclair, is not, as I believe at least, a word for the use of near relations. You have as good a right to know the secrets of this prison house, as Mademoiselle Melanie, or myself. Am I not right, Mademoiselle Melanie? On questions regarding females, a female opinion is not without value."

Mademoiselle Melanie blushed at the unwonted deference, but gave her consent in his own words.

"As good a right, *comme je suppose*, as Dr. Oliver or myself."

A courteous bow thanked her for her acquiescence, and Dr. Oliver was about to speak, when Alan glanced uneasily at the door; curious he certainly was, but he was much more afraid of indiscretion towards Jane's private affairs.

"Miss Sinclair is much engaged this morning," Dr. Oliver replied, to the silent admonition. "My lord has had a bad night. But as you please, Major Sinclair," he added, testily, "I have not the smallest wish to force upon you any family communications whatever, and if you choose to doubt *my* discretion, you or any man are at liberty to do so."

"I do not doubt it," Alan said, courteously, "and trusting to your discretion, I am anxious to hear."

"I will make a long story as short as I can then. About three years,

Major Sinclair, after you left this neighbourhood, and two years after I first came to practise in it, a young gentleman, Malcolm Alexander by name, the possessor, at that time, of the old castle and property you mention, came of age, and came to reside in his own dominions. He had been a minor for some six or seven years, and had not been in the best of hands; but on coming of age, he shook himself free, and determined, as I said, to reside at home. Our young lairds, our poor young lairds (with a sigh), became acquainted with him, and he, nothing loth, I guess, passed a good portion of his time at Loch-Art. The acquaintance continued for upwards of a year before we came to regard him in any other light than as the friend of our young men. Even *my* eyes discovered no other friendship, and I conclude, therefore,

and have good reason to do so, that nothing further was then in being. But after this time, my eyes began to make another discovery. Miss Sinclair, as you are well aware, was the constant companion of her brothers, and during the months that had elapsed she had naturally enjoyed the society of the stranger guest in as great a degree as they did. When, therefore, after the lapse of some eighteen months, he began shyly and quietly to pay his addresses to her, she was already prepared to be won; and she was won.

"Nor was there any reason, Major Sinclair, why she should not be won; as it appeared at least. The young gentleman was well formed, and certainly was agreeable and pleasant in his manners. I cannot say he would have won me; I cannot say he was ever a favourite with

me; but I stood in a different position to that of a young lady unused to society, unused to the flatteries of the other sex, and in *her* position, I do not say but that I might perchance have felt as she did.

"But to proceed. Perhaps you are aware, Major Sinclair, or more probably, you are not aware, since few are so, that Miss Sinclair is in possession of an independent fortune, one since she came of age entirely in her own power. It was left to her by a maternal aunt; a sum of £12,000. When she came of age, Lord Sinclair, who is a sensible man, remarked to her that she was not at that moment in want of money, and recommended that, with the exception of a small yearly allowance, it should still be allowed to accumulate, until she might require it; she, of course, acquiesced in his will. I

said that few were aware of the circumstance. It was Lord Sinclair's wish that it should not be bandied abroad. In his good days, Lord Sinclair was a far-sighted man, and he did not wish his daughter to be the prey of fortune-hunters. At the same time, it is possible that, in playful conversation, the brothers may occasionally have styled their sister "the heiress." Certainly by some means or other—I incline to think by this—the circumstance did become known to Mr. Alexander, and whether or no that knowledge influenced his affections, I leave you to judge.

"In due course, Mr. Alexander made his private proposals to Miss Sinclair, and his public proposals to my lord. Miss Sinclair unhesitatingly accepted him, subject to her father's approval. She was much attached to him. You may have observed

a peculiar force and energy in her character, and what she feels and says, she feels and says with all her soul. She now gave her heart to him who asked it, and gave it with the energy belonging to her character. Lord Sinclair was taken by surprise. He had his wits about him for many occasions of life, but my lord was no keen observer of the affairs of the heart."

"*Les affaires du cœur*," sighed Mademoiselle Melanie, softly.

"He was taken by surprise, although *I*, with far less opportunity, had been for many weeks aware of the state of the case. He was not only taken by surprise, he was displeased and annoyed. He had observed, it appeared, an extravagant disposition in the young gentleman; and with Lord Sinclair extravagance has always been a crime; and he is not far wrong,

Major Sinclair," and Dr. Oliver here paused, and took a pinch of snuff.

"If it is not a crime, it is the greatest misery-maker in this world, and I don't envy *its* feelings when the great day comes. He therefore objected to the proposed marriage. Seeing, however, that his daughter's affections were absolutely engaged, he modified his first refusal into a half measure. A year was to elapse. The young gentleman was no longer to be a frequent guest; and, if at the end of that time he had good reason to be satisfied with his conduct, he promised, not to consent, no, no,—my lord bound himself to nothing—but to reconsider his present determination.

"To this decision Miss Sinclair submitted without reluctance. She has always been a trusting and dutiful daughter, and confident that her father was acting to

the best of his judgment, and confident in the truth and devotion of her lover, she thought of a year's probation as a trial too slight to be accounted such. But Mr. Alexander received it in another spirit. He seemed dismayed, and it required all Miss Sinclair's assurances of her fidelity to support him under it. She naturally attributed his dismay to the strength of his attachment, and if it were possible it strengthened hers.

"He went. I believe part of the year was consumed in a tour abroad; but I never heard many details of his doings. It was about six months after his departure that Miss Sinclair received a letter from him—a singular one. The following facts were related to me by Lord Sinclair. The letter, amid many professions of distress at their separation, alluded to some slight difficulties in

money matters; and alluding also to Miss Sinclair's independent fortune, asked her assistance for a sum—no large one—that he named. There are means and ways of couching such requests, and I have no doubt the young gentleman made the best of his case, and treated the subject as lightly as possible.

"The letter was a breach of compact. He was allowed to correspond with her brothers, but not with Miss Sinclair. She was annoyed at its tone, and at the request; but had its contents been such as to annihilate all her hopes, she would have had no hesitation as to her duty. It was a breach of trust, and it was placed in her father's hand. His displeasure was great. His suspicion of the dangers into which Mr. Alexander's extravagance led him, still greater. Yet, seeing the distress of his daughter, he allowed her

to answer the letter, and since she would not otherwise be satisfied, to send the money. At the same time he redoubled his vigilance in endeavouring to arrive at the true character of his destined son-in-law; and, as I believe, he gave him also a piece of his mind.

"Several months more elapsed, and then a blow, a totally unexpected one, came. The young gentleman had not only gambled his fortune away, but he had been discovered, along with some others, in dishonourable practices in play, and had fled the country. Shortly afterwards, creditors came down upon his property, and all was sold.

"Miss Sinclair has been a different person since those days. You remember her perhaps as I do—a wild, heedless girl, feminine only in her unselfish devotion to the comforts of all around her.

Her attachment, indeed, had softened and elevated her; but still she was the companion of her brothers' sports, the ardent unsophisticated maiden of the mountains. But this shock changed her for life. Youth passed at once, and she gradually assumed the grave, composed demeanour she wears now. Not that she suffered from a struggle with her affections. I believe her love died out at once, and for ever. Some natures cannot love a being devoid of honour. In this family, honour had been, perhaps, too much of a divinity. She ceased at once and for ever to love her lover; but not the less the suffering ate into her soul.

"At her request, I may say at her command, a part of her fortune was withdrawn from the funds and placed in the hands of a relation of Mr Alexander's for his use and benefit; and having done this

deed she banished him from her memory. He went, I believe, to Australia, and from thence once wrote to thank her for what she had done; but as Lord Sinclair told me the letter excited no regrets. She put him aside from her thoughts, and makes no inquiries regarding him. I believe I may say that from that day to this she has never mentioned his name, nor has it, except in great privacy, as between my lord and me, or now as between you and me, Major Sinclair, and Mademoiselle Melanie, been spoken in . . . . ."

Before the last words were said the door opened and Jane entered quietly as usual. Alan had been listening with an interest so intense that he had forgotten the possibility he had previously expected. He started, drew back his head and coloured, as a child does who is caught in a guilty act. Mademoiselle Melanie said "Ahem!"

and shook back her curls as much as to say, "I shake myself free of all blame." Dr. Oliver alone maintained his dignity, and observing, "You are late, my lady!" took a pinch of snuff.

Jane looked round with her intent eyes into the faces of each, but she made no observation; and perceiving that breakfast was over, very shortly begged that she might not detain Dr. Oliver or Mademoiselle Melanie.

They obeyed her and departed. She finished her breakfast almost in silence, while Alan, distressed and uncomfortable, strolled to the window and stood there, occasionally making a remark, but absorbed in thought as to whether he should allude to what had passed or not.

When she had finished, Jane joined him at the window, laid her hand on his arm, and looking in his face said, "Was Dr.

Oliver saying anything about my father that I am not to know? I will not have it, Alan. I will know everything."

"My dear Jane, indeed he was saying nothing of that kind to me. He was speaking on another subject." He hesitated, and she looked inquiringly in his face.

"My dear Jane," he said again, and grasped her hand in his intense sympathy, "from a question I chanced to ask he was led to tell me. . . he was telling me of all you had suffered in long past days."

Her countenance and attitude changed, her cheek became livid, and her eyes distended and shone with unnatural brightness. "Hush, Alan," she said, hoarsely, laying her hand on his arm, "some things cannot be spoken of; this cannot. I have borne it, God strengthened me to bear it, but do not dare to speak of it to me."

And before he could answer, or express one word of acquiescence or soothing, she had disappeared from the room.

He stood looking after her, and for a time a pity so great took possession of his soul, that his own self and his own griefs were forgotten. This could not long endure; but certainly the remembrance of Jane's face, and the thought of what she had suffered, in some degree modified the opinion he held and indulged, that in the annals of mortality no trial had ever been equal to his.

CHAPTER XIX.

"In my soul I loathe
All affectation. 'Tis my perfect scorn;
Object of my implacable disgust."

COWPER.

WE must leave Alan at Loch-Art, and return to Mary in London, taking up the narrative at the point where Alan paid her his visit.

"Thou hast comforted me marvellous much," was the exclamation of poor Juliet, in the tragedy, to her nurse, and

even such might have been Mary's exclamation when that meeting with Alan was over.

There was a look in his face, a reckless, despairing look, which spoke volumes to her self-reproaching heart, and haunted her, turn where she would. To her loss, and to his also, to the event that separated, to the discipline that tried them, she could submit, and trust that it might end in good; but it was less easy to face the thought that she had perilled not only his earthly, but his eternal happiness; that she had harmed not only his present welfare, but the welfare of his soul.

The night following this meeting she never slept; she went over and over in thought all that had passed; questioned again and again her motives, her feelings; stretched on the rack those im-

pulses of filial affection, and gratitude to Mr. Merivale, by which she had been led, and after all her questioning found herself more miserable and comfortless than when she began. The old feelings that before had swayed, could not be revived. She could only *feel* what she felt now.

Her health was no longer strong as in her happy days, and after this night she came down to breakfast looking so pale, so haggard, and unconsciously so dejected and depressed, that as she stood in the light her appearance attracted Mr. Merivale's attention. For a moment the possible cause of her pallid, care-worn air was forgotten, and a fear flashed like lightning through his brain, that Mary might die.

Acting on a sudden impulse, and speaking under the pressure of anxiety, he cried—

"Are you ill, Mary?"

It was in a voice to which she had become unaccustomed, a voice strangely different to the cold tone in which he usually spoke, and a flash of surprise and pleasure passed over her cheek, and illumined her dejected countenance.

"Was it possible," Mr. Merivale inwardly exclaimed, as he gazed at her; "had *he* had power to bring that colour there?"

It was a thought so sweet that he stood still to enjoy it; afraid of trusting himself to speak, lest he should disclose the rapture of his soul.

"I have a headache this morning; that is all," she replied, gently. "I shall be quite well after breakfast," and she seated herself at the table.

Mr. Merivale recovered his composure, and seated himself also.

"What had caused the headache?" now asked his suspicious heart, and that question was enough to compose him.

But the influence of that one moment's bliss could not entirely fade away, and so peacefully passed the hour of breakfast, that Mary was comforted and helped at the moment she most needed comfort.

So tranquil was Mr. Merivale's mood, that, remembering Frank's request regarding Miss Davis, and anxious to act upon it, she mentioned the Davis's as old and kind friends of her brother's, and ended by asking leave to call upon the family.

A ready permission was given, and she then inquired how far it was to Gloucester Terrace, in the Regent's Park.

He explained to her exactly, said it was not at all too far for her to drive,

and in short the morning hour left nothing but pleasant thoughts in Mary's mind. She was, however, too much occupied with the haunting recollection of Alan's face, to give to Mr. Merivale's mood all the thought it required. She did not love him, and the eye of duty at its very highest pitch does not pierce into the roots and fibres of things. She did not do all she might have done, or even reflect as she ought on the changes of his moods. She felt only that he was that day kind, and basked in the kindness and was thankful, while her thoughts were still occupied with the welfare of another.

Immediately after luncheon she drove to Gloucester Terrace, and, unaccustomed to the ways of London, arrived at the inconvenient hour of five minutes before three.

She was shown into an empty drawing-

room, a good room, but too much set out for comfort.

One seat attracted her. It was near a little table, and on the table was a work-box, a thimble, and a shirt front embroidered with a waste of beautiful embroidery. Mary got up to look at it; not that she admired embroidered shirts, but that the act of the embroidery spoke of industry and affection, and as she reseated herself she indulged a hope that that seat belonged to Mrs. Larpent.

In about five minutes the door opened, and a fat elderly lady entered in her bonnet, attended by two young ladies, one in a bonnet and one without. None of these could be the widow, Mrs. Larpent.

The elderly lady had a fresh-coloured, comely face. Her appearance was unrefined, but not vulgar, for she was

satisfied to be as she was. The young lady in a bonnet was very pretty, but affected-looking; the other girl was less pretty, but in Mary's eyes more pleasing. She slipped to her place by the workbox, destroying Mary's hope regarding Mrs. Larpent, and stood there while the others addressed Mary.

"My dear Mrs. Merivale, this *is* being very kind and friendly. Mr. Lyndsay led us to hope you would call 'some day,' but we all know what 'some day' is with fine ladies in London, don't we, Lavvy?"

"But I am not a fine lady, and I am very glad to call," Mary said, in her sweet, winning manner. "I should be very ungrateful for all your kindness to my brother if I was not glad to have the power of thanking you."

"I am sure, Mrs. Merivale, you are ex-

tremely good to speak as you do, for you must know we are all flattered by the visits of so fine a young man as Mr. Lyndsay."

"And is this another daughter?" Mary said, turning to the retiring girl, "May I not make acquaintance with her too?"

"She will be very proud, I am sure, but she is only just out, and where there are so many, we keep her back a little. Yes, another daughter, one of four. That is my daughter Polly."

"Oh! mamma," said Lavinia.

"You must know, Mrs. Merivale, that she is named Mary, after a sister who died, and somehow I never had the heart to call her anything but Polly; but they tell me I must, now she is grown up."

"I like Polly," Mary said, smiling, "and

I daresay you don't dislike it. Do you?" and she looked into the young girl's face, hoping to find an answering nature there.

Polly blushed, and said truthfully, "I don't much like it, I am sorry to say."

"Polly did not mind," said Mrs. Davis, quickly, "or I should not have done it, till about a year ago, when Mr. Lyndsay laughed at her, and said it was like a housemaid. I must try what I can do; but do what I can I always forget to change."

"If I were you I would learn to like it," Mary said to Polly. "My brother is not at all to be minded about such things. I never mind his laughing at me." Then remembering that Mrs. Davis had got her bonnet on, she turned to her, and begged she might not detain her.

"Thank you very much, Mrs. Merivale," she replied heartily. "The fact is we *have* hired a clarence for the afternoon, and it would certainly be a pity to lose what we pay for by the hour."

"Oh! mamma!" said Lavinia, who seemed to have no conversation beyond this observation.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Merivale, for speaking so free, but you make me feel at home at once; and the fact is I can't learn manners in my old age. When we began life, Mr. Davis and me, we were no great things; but, thank God, we've got on pretty fast, and I hope my children will take a good place in the world."

"Is the clarence come?" Mary asked.

"No. Our man will tell us as soon as it comes, and Louisa is not come down yet. She is going with us. She gets

tired of staying at home, poor thing, and so we are going to do some shopping."

"Louisa is Mrs. Larpent, is she not? I have often heard my brother speak of her."

"Why, yes," looking rather conscious. "They were great cronies once; but then she thought it best to marry, poor thing, and so there was an end."

"Here is Louisa," proclaimed Lavinia.

Very anxiously and curiously, for Frank's sake, Mary turned her eyes to the door, and very hastily she decided that all her influence should be exerted against his hopes in that quarter, and the hopes, if there were such, of Mrs. Larpent.

She was pretty, and more than pretty. Such a figure, such features, and such a brilliant complexion, would have been pronounced beautiful, under almost any circumstances; but could not be called

so in Mrs. Larpent; a set smile, self-satisfied and artificial, spoiled her charms; and in Mary's eyes she was little better than ugly.

She was dressed in very handsome mourning, and as coquettishly as was possible in a widow's dress. As soon as she saw Mary, though perfectly aware she was there, she pulled down her crape veil, and on Mary making the advance, still veiled, shook hands with her. She then sat down, rustling her widow's silk as much as she could make it rustle.

"Don't keep your veil down, Louy," said her mother. "Mr. Lyndsay's sister is quite a friend."

She put it up modestly, but without speaking, and Mary, who could get on perfectly with old Mrs. Davis, felt quite at a loss what to say to her.

"You are just going out," she said at

last. "I am sorry to have called at a bad time."

"No time ought to be bad with me," she replied, casting down her eyes, "but mamma persuaded me for my health and spirits to go out with her. I have no carriage of my own just at present."

"It is much better to go out," Mary said prosaically, "nobody can be well without air."

"That's what I say," said Mrs. Davis, "and if she and Lavinia would take a good walk in the Regent's Park, as Polly does, they would be the better for it."

"Oh! mamma," said Mrs. Larpent, in a reproachful, deprecating tone.

Fortunately for Mary, who was quite at a loss for conversation, the clarence was now said to be at the door. She immediately rose, and so did the others,

Mrs. Davis most readily, Mrs. Larpent reluctantly, and saying, "Surely we need not be in haste."

"I have explained it all to Mrs. Merivale," said Mrs. Davis, "and she will excuse us. When she comes to be the mother of four daughters, she will know that money must not be thrown in the dirt."

There was the chorus of "Oh, mamma!" from both daughters, to which Mrs. Davis paid little heed. She very cordially wished Mary good-bye, and hoped she would call again, and then bustled on to the stairs, in her extreme anxiety that no time should be lost.

"In my present situation, my dear Mrs. Merivale," began Mrs. Larpent, adjusting her veil round her face, "it is not for me to ask the visits of strangers; but exceptions may be made, and the sister

of so old and valued a friend . . . . You understand me," and she shook Mary's hand, "*you* will be always welcome."

"Thank you," Mary said, coldly, withdrawing her hand. "If I may I will stay now, and pay a visit to your sister. Pray do not let me detain *you*. I know Mrs. Davis is in a hurry."

"Mary will be much flattered, I am sure. *Au revoir*, dear Mrs. Merivale," and she and Lavinia went.

Polly was blushing when Mary turned to her, whether at her sisters' speeches, or with pleasure or terror at the visit to herself, Mary could not tell; she liked the girl's face, and she sat down by her and entered into easy conversation.

"So you are only just out, Miss Davis?" she began.

"I have been out all the year since

February," she replied, "but I don't go out very often. I don't think people know I am out yet. They ask Lavinia, but they very seldom ask me."

"What is to be done to enlighten the world?" Mary said, with kind but matronly manner. "How many balls have you had?"

"Only four," she said, dejectedly.

"And have you many acquaintances? does my brother dance with you?"

"Yes," said Polly," with excitement, "he was very kind. He danced with me twice the very first night I went out."

"I hope you will soon have some more balls, but I hope you like home too," Mary said in her earnest way.

"Oh, yes, I do indeed. Mamma makes me help her, and I like to do it, and I am very happy indeed at home."

"That is right; I must say I like people to be happy at home; and now may I look at your work? I was admiring it before you came in."

"It is for one of my brothers. He admired one, a very beautiful one," she continued, blushing, "which Mr. Lyndsay brought from Paris, and he was kind enough, Mr. Lyndsay was, to let me take the pattern."

"You have been very industrious. Is it for your eldest brother?"

"No, the second. I am very fond of him, and he is very kind to me. My eldest brother says he is too old for embroidered shirts. My second brother is Mr. Lyndsay's friend."

Mary could scarcely help smiling at the transparency with which her companion betrayed a *penchant* of which she herself was probably unconscious. She felt

so old and careworn by her side, that the very contrast between them gave a charm to the young girl, and made her endeavour to draw out her character. She was pleased enough to invite her to drive with her some afternoon; and she went away, leaving Mary Davis dissolved in love and admiration at the charms and beauty of Mr. Lyndsay's sister.

When Frank called on Mary the following day, he had already heard from his Davis friend of Mary's visit, and came in, breathless with excitement, to hear her opinion.

"Well, Mary, and so you went to call. It was uncommonly kind, I must say, and they were all uncommonly pleased with you, that I can tell you, and thought it a very polite thing for you to do. Well, and what did you think of them all?"

"I liked old Mrs. Davis very much," Mary said.

"Well, I should not just have pitched upon her; not but what I like her too. She's uncommonly civil; but you know what I mean. How did you like Mrs. L——?"

"Not much—in fact, not at all."

"My dear Mary," he said, growing very red, "you will please to remember that you are speaking of the person to whom I am attached."

Since the previous day Mary's thoughts, weary of their own sad burden, had been engaged with Frank's affairs. She saw at a glance what Mrs. Larpent was, and would be—a coquette, a lover of finery, and a lover of excitement and dissipation. She saw she would need a guide herself, and would be no guide for Frank's un-

steady footsteps. She therefore replied with earnestness, "I hope not, Frank; with all my heart, I hope not."

He looked blank and dismayed at her fervent exclamation, but soon recovered himself. "It is no use hoping not, when the thing is done. I tell you I *was* attached, though of course I made no fuss about it, when she thought it right to act as she did. And now be so good as to give me your reasons. You can't deny she is very handsome?"

"I suppose she is; but she is not handsome or beautitul to me."

"You see her at a disadvantage. She was one of the finest girls going when she was Louisa Davis."

"You will be disappointed when you see her now; she is very disagreeable."

"Disagreeable! my dear Mary, you use

very extraordinary language to-day, and I don't choose to have it."

"I won't then. I will tell you about another of the family that I liked—the girl Mrs. Davis calls 'Polly.'"

"Ah! I heard she was raving about you. But what do I care for her? Such a name, too! She's a very good-natured and useful girl, and has mended my gloves about a hundred times; but compare her to Mrs. Larpent! My dear Mary, you are a goose.

"And I think, Frank," she continued, smiling, "that she rather likes you."

"Well, Mary," he said, without the least surprise, "if she does, she is not the first girl who has done so. You think little of me; but I can tell you—— but, however, I don't suppose you wish me to go about marrying all the girls who happen to admire me."

"Not at all—not to marry anybody whom you don't love with all your heart; but if you talk of comparison between the two, I see no comparison between the fancy of a young girl, which is entirely for yourself, and without any thought even of a return, and the fancy of Mrs. Larpent, which left her able to marry before, and which—whatever may be her intention now—would leave her able to marry again, if a richer or better looking person appeared."

"You think that she *has* some thoughts of me now," Frank said, quickly and anxiously.

"Yes, I do. I have very little doubt of it."

"Ah!" he said, with a look of extreme complacency, "that is just what I thought. Why, what did she say?"

"She called me *dear* Mrs. Merivale, and squeezed my hand, and called you her old and valued friend. I quite hated her, Frank, when she spoke. I am sorry to be so ill-natured, but I did."

"And I am very sorry, too, to hear you so ill-natured, Mary. It's not what I expected of you. I expected you to be pleased at my bright prospects."

Mary shook her head.

"Well, Mary, as you can't expect *me* to be guided by such an opinion, I shall follow my own way. I have had a sort of a hint that my calling on her will not be taken amiss, and so I mean to call. I don't mean to do anything improper, but I shall look in to tea one of these evenings, and see her again."

But though he spoke resolutely, it was

evident Mary's opinion had annoyed and affected him, and he left her unwilling to hear more.

END VOL. II.

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